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HENRY ALLON D.D.

PASTOR AND TEACHER



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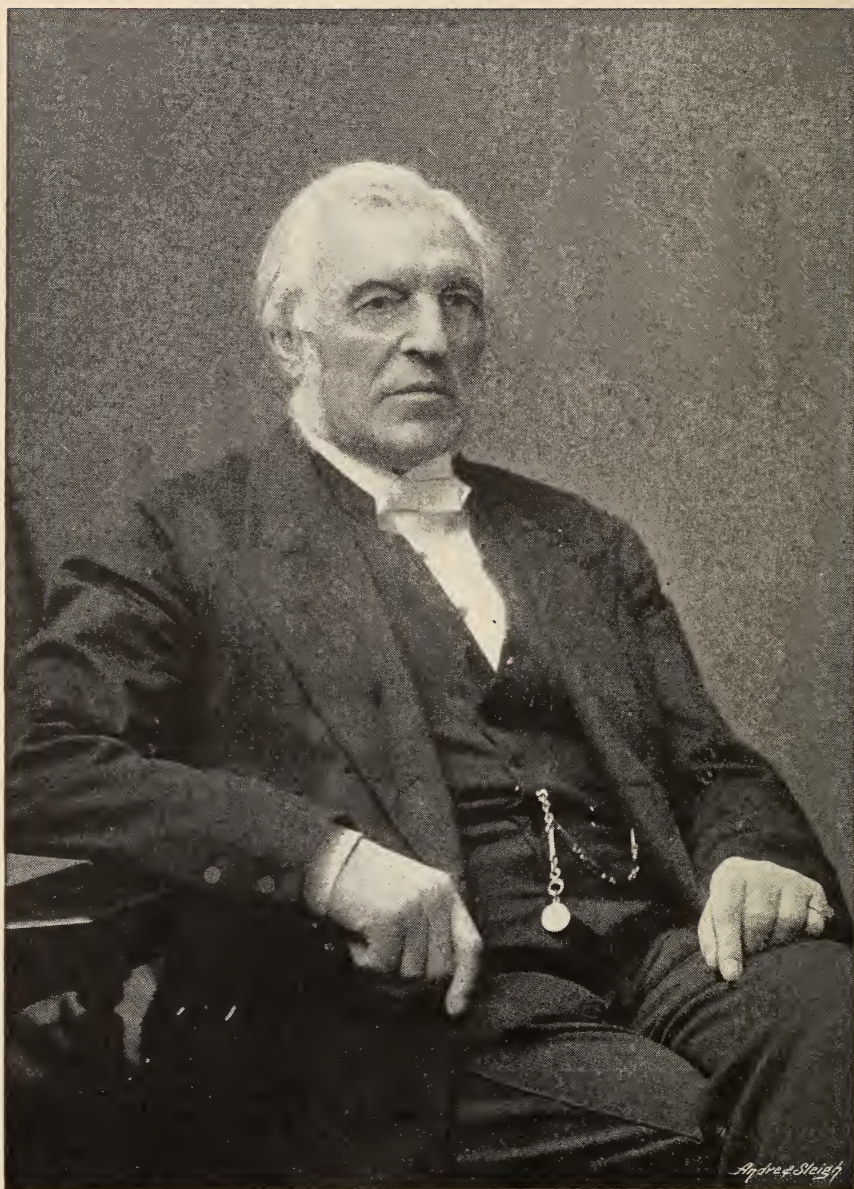


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HENRY ALLON D.D

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HENRY ALLON D.D.

*PASTOR AND TEACHER*

The Story of his Ministry with Selected Sermons  
and Addresses

BY

✓  
THE REV. W. HARDY HARWOOD

CASSELL AND COMPANY LIMITED  
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1894

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## PREFACE.

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THE aim of this volume is simply to present a picture of the activities of a long and busy life. It does not profess to be, in the ordinary sense, either biographical or critical: it is a straightforward account of the chief events of Dr. Allon's life and ministry, with such personal references as are needful to the picture, and such selections from his sermons and addresses as will, it is hoped, represent the many sides of his public teaching.

Remembering the prominent position which Dr. Allon filled, and the great number of people with whom, during the many years of his ministry, he came into close association, the materials for a story of his life are exceedingly slight. The fact that he was pastor of the same church for nearly half a century, and that the history of that long pastorate was, speaking generally, one of unbroken peace

and prosperity, made one year much like another in its simple record of beneficent activities. He had made no preparation whatever for a biography of himself, nor are there any signs that he contemplated such preparation. Many of the friends, moreover, to whom he would have been likely, under other circumstances, to write upon subjects of permanent interest, were those with whom he was brought into frequent personal contact. The sketch, therefore, is largely confined to the externals of the life, with such light upon his work and character (in the fifth chapter especially) as I have been able to gather from the testimony of others, confirming and supplementing my own knowledge.

In the preparation of the volume I have had the co-operation, which I here gratefully acknowledge, of Mrs. Allon and her family. Its production has been delayed by the numberless demands upon my time and strength which the sudden death of Dr. Allon thrust upon me, and which, for the first year or more, I found it impossible to satisfy. Even had I the will or the ability, my position

would have prevented me from attempting anything like a critical analysis of Dr. Allon's work and character. I send out this simple sketch as a tribute of respect and affection to the memory of one whom I had learnt to love, and whose successor I am proud to be.

W. H. HARWOOD.

*Union Chapel, Islington, March, 1894.*

POSTSCRIPT.—The preface to this volume was written, and the volume itself in type, when the sudden death of Mrs. Allon added a new and painful interest to the story. I had written the words, to be placed on the title-page of the book—

“To Mrs. Allon this volume is affectionately inscribed,”  
and I should like the spirit of them to be preserved. The deep affection and loyalty of Mrs. Allon, making her home a home indeed, was one of the secrets of Dr. Allon's happy and successful career, and is now the cherished memory of her children. Since his death she had done all she

could to perpetuate the usefulness of the church so long associated with his name, and to strengthen the hands of his successor; and I gratefully inscribe to her memory this brief account of her husband's wise, earnest, and successful ministry.

W. H. H.

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# HENRY ALLON:

## THE STORY OF HIS MINISTRY.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### EARLY YEARS.

It is a commonplace of the biography of to-day to say that they whose lot has been cast in the second and third quarters of this nineteenth century have lived through the most remarkable fifty years in the history of the modern world. Whatever may be the interest of their own personal history they must, if they have taken any part in public life at all, have contributed something to a story of varied and inexhaustible interest. They have been active in a period of almost miraculous activity. After a long winter and a still longer spring, with occasional bursts of premature summer, there came almost suddenly the ripening of the fruits of many a weary sowing and long waiting. In many departments, material and spiritual, there has been the entrance into a new world, of which the former times had been only a prophecy. A Rip van Winkle, who should have been lulled to sleep by the calm which followed the storm of Waterloo, and been roused again by the cannon of Sedan, might well have supposed

that he had been sleeping for five centuries rather than for five decades, so rapid has been the progress in many directions.

And of all the changes and developments none has been more remarkable than those which have taken place in men's thoughts of God and of life. It was obviously impossible that men should begin to live in so much larger a world without some readjustment of their intellectual attitudes; the world without must have some correspondence to the world within. But great intellectual changes are not made without much travail and real heroism. They are not produced mechanically, but are the fruit of honest and fearless thought. The problem before many men in such an age has been how to be free from the yoke of mere tradition and yet to remain loyal to the truths by which they lived. Their solution of the problem has been a cause, as well as a symptom, of much of the intellectual advance. The spiritual history of such men, could it be written, would be of the profoundest interest, and though its most significant features lie hidden in the secret places of life, it is yet possible to see something of the processes by which that history has been produced.

Now, true as this is of all men who have shared in the intellectual life of the day, it is particularly true of one who is a public guide or teacher, and most of all, perhaps, of one who is an intelligent and honest preacher of the Gospel. Every sincere ministry is to an extent autobiographical. A thoughtful and observant congregation will, without any direct communication, be constantly admitted into the preacher's most

sacred confidence; they will know him in some respects better than he knows himself; they will be able to measure the degree of his progress or otherwise by methods of which they themselves are hardly conscious.

It may further be urged, perhaps, without offence, that the life of a prominent minister in the Free Churches will furnish a specially striking instance of this. It is no longer possible for a man in such a position to live the life of a recluse; the ties which bind him to his congregation, being moral rather than official, can only be preserved by healthy, living sympathy, and it will be essential to that sympathy that there should be knowledge of the world and its doings. If he be a man of any real sensitiveness, the history of his teaching and work will be in some sort a reflection of the current life of his day.

There is little doubt that the most striking illustrations of this reflection of the general life in the history of a ministry have been found in provincial cities and towns; many names might be mentioned of Nonconformist ministers whose activity has been closely interwoven with all the best life of the community in the midst of which their lot was cast. While faithfully fulfilling their directly pastoral responsibilities, they have been leaders and helpers in all progressive and preservative movements in the town's life, and their activity has been largely the measure of the town's progress. But in solitary instances here and there this possibility has been exemplified on a larger and an almost national scale. The public ministry has been



exercised in connection with some prominent Church, and the ability and public sympathy of the minister have brought him into contact with men of many thoughts and many activities. When the history of movements with which such a man has been associated comes to be written he will not perhaps be found always to have filled the most prominent places; none the less has he borne his share, and from the standpoint of a religious conception of life has provided a spiritual barometer for the measurement of the intellectual and spiritual atmospheres which surrounded him.

Now, useful and important as such lives have been, their story is often difficult to tell; their life has become so interwoven with contemporary history, social and ecclesiastical, that to write any separate account of their personal history becomes almost an impossibility. The man who is identified with some social or moral revolution, whose story has been one of constant opposition, and of a warfare, the only rest from which was the final and lasting rest—of him much may be said; but in the case of the man whose history has been a peaceful evolution, who has grown with the larger life of the day, his words and activities, great as they have been, are as the waters of the stream, not upon rugged mountains, but after they have become merged in the great river, watering and fructifying peaceful valleys.

There have been few more distinguished instances of this peaceful and progressive history than that which is provided by the life of Dr. Allon. During the remarkable history of the past fifty years he



has occupied a position of growing importance. The growth of what his colleague, Mr. Lewis, used to call the "village of Islington" is only an illustration of the general growth on every hand. The life of London, the sphere of Nonconformist activity, the ideal of public worship, the multiplied activities of Church life—in all these directions there has been an ever-increasing advance, and in all of them he bore a distinguished part. But so much of the service that he rendered was merged in the larger movements—personal fame and honour being to him of much less importance than public and private duty—that the actual record which remains is altogether out of proportion to the importance of the place which he filled, and the work which he did.

Henry Allon was a Yorkshireman, and was born October 13th, 1818. His birthplace, Welton, is a prettily situated village not far from the banks of the Humber, and within a few miles of Hull. There, amongst the simple conditions of rural life, were laid the foundations of the great physical strength by means of which he was able in after years to accomplish so much without fatigue or illness. It is a fact of which our reformers may well take note, that the lives of many of our strongest and most successful men are rooted in the country. Many who become prominent and fill high places carry about with them to the end the atmosphere of the simple life of some hamlet or village. The town-bred child may gain something in quickness and ease of manner; he certainly loses something in the lack of the natural memories and vigorous

life which are the fruit of an early and wisely directed life in rural places. It was impossible to spend half an hour in Dr. Allon's company without being sure that the roots of his life were deep in the associations of some country place. One or two provincial pronunciations he never lost, and they added a charm to the vigorous way in which he spoke, so happy a contrast to the affected manner which is too often met with to-day. Of his early life in the village little can be said; he outlived most of his contemporaries, and the traditions which are to be found are of the faintest; none, indeed, important enough to record here.

But the love of the village life continued with him always. The present writer heard him, not many days before his death, describe in glowing language the beauties of the neighbourhood, and especially of a famous glen near the village, and tell again some of the romantic stories connected with the history of old families in the district. It was always a delight to him when in the neighbourhood to visit again the scenes of his earliest life.

Dr. Allon, like so many successful preachers, came of parents whom he greatly revered. Of his mother he always spoke with deepest affection and gratitude, and for his father's uprightness of character he had the profoundest and most grateful respect.

Mr. William Allon was a builder and afterwards an estate steward. The first intention was that the son should follow his father's business, and after the usual education in the schools which the neighbourhood provided, he was apprenticed at Beverley. But he was

really preparing for a very different life work. From very early days he had shown strong religious susceptibilities; but it was not until he was fifteen that he was brought under definite religious influences. Some Wesleyan friends at Beverley induced him to become a teacher in their Sunday school, and a regular attendant at their chapel; and through the preaching which he heard there—that of one young minister especially, whom he mentioned gratefully at his ordination—a Mr. Hobkirk—he was induced at about seventeen to “give his heart to God.” After about a year’s fellowship with the Wesleyans his views of Church polity and of doctrine underwent some modification, and he joined the Congregational church at Beverley, of which the Rev. J. Mather was pastor.

They little appreciate the value of the religious revival of last century who suppose that its effects can be summed up in what is known as the great Methodist Church. The life of the great evangelical movement has nowhere been seen more clearly than in the effects which it has produced upon other churches than that of Wesley’s founding; and there are many in the ministry of all the Churches who owe much to the evangelical fervour which has come from their association at some time with some feature of Methodist life. Though, with the views of doctrine which Henry Allon declared himself to hold at his ordination, it would have been impossible for him to become a Wesleyan minister, yet he himself, at the suitable time, made public acknowledgment of the fact that his chief religious inspirations were derived from association with Methodist services. To the end of



his life he repaid that debt by friendliness and willing service, a recognition of which was made by the presence at his funeral of Dr. Stephenson, the then President of the Wesleyan Conference. He never thought of entering the Wesleyan ministry, and was never even a lay preacher of the society; but of the associations and inspiring impulses which belonged to the earlier days of his religious life he spoke always with sincerest gratitude.

After joining the Congregational church at Beverley he became at once an active Christian worker, teaching in the Sunday school, and leading what were known as district prayer-meetings. After much hesitation he was, when about nineteen, prevailed upon by two members of the church who used to preach in the neighbouring villages, to address a small congregation, and from that time began regularly to preach at the village stations, and continued to do so for more than a year. During this time the thought of the ministry was often present with him, but only as a desirable sphere of work altogether out of his reach. The remoteness of the country life which he was living, and his ignorance of the methods of obtaining entrance to college, caused him not only to keep secret to himself any desires which he might entertain, but also to fight against the desires as longings after the impracticable.

But one of those accidents which are really the highest Providence was to put within his reach that which seemed so far from him. By some unexpected circumstance his business engagement terminated suddenly at Beverley, and he obtained another

in Hull. On the morning of his departure he happened to meet one of the deacons of the chapel, and told him of his coming change of residence. At the time nothing was said, but during the day the deacon held a consultation with his colleagues and the minister of the church, Mr. Mather, and on the same evening a formal proposal was made to Mr. Allon that he should devote himself to the ministry. That proposal was afterwards enforced by a unanimous vote of the church, and by the expressed opinions of several ministers in Hull and the neighbourhood to whom Mr. Allon was known, and for whom he had preached. He became for a while a member of the church worshipping in Fish Street, Hull, under the pastoral care of the Rev. T. Stratton, formerly the first minister of the church in Sunderland, from which Dr. Allon's co-pastor and successor was long afterwards to come. At his ordination service, after a very full account of all these events, he went on to say :—

“ I have been thus minute in mentioning these circumstances, as it has often been an unspeakable encouragement, amid various discouragements, and frequent anxieties, to know whether or not I was in the position which God would have me to occupy—to reflect that I have not intruded myself into the ministerial office, but that every step which I have taken towards it has been solicited by others. I have always regarded the coincidence of my own earnest but unexpressed inclinations with the views and wishes of my pastor and the church as an indication of the Divine will ; for I have always considered the voice of the church, in this matter especially, to be the voice of God, and the *most*, if not the only, satisfactory call to the

Christian ministry, and especially when it is a response to strong and cherished inclinations. From these, the providential circumstances (as I must regard them) which led me to seek admission to Cheshunt College, and also from the measure of success with which God has been pleased to accompany my labours in His cause, I would confidently trust that I am following His will in thus seeking the office of the Christian ministry."

His attitude upon this question was characteristic. Few men were more modest, few more self-controlled. The mere desire to enter the ministry would with some men have been sufficient excuse for every possible form of agitation to secure that end. With most men it would, at least, have been a subject of much consultation and conversation; but he, whose strength made him afterwards the confidential adviser of so many, was able to keep to himself that, the utterance of which might possibly cause an interruption in the Divinely ordered plan of his life.

No man needs to thrust himself into the Christian ministry. A mere desire to preach and a zeal for service are no indication of fitness for this high office, and many ministers of churches are to blame, in that they have, on the strength of no greater qualification, encouraged young men to enter college who have at once become and have remained to the end a burden upon the churches. In all the endeavours of to-day to improve the standard of the ministry, there are needed stronger safeguards at one point which has been somewhat neglected—the taking of the first steps into the ministry. The office is so sacred and is becoming



so increasingly important that the evidence of a man's fitness, which is his Divine appointment, should be overwhelming. If he have not that fitness, the increased college training will only convert him into a mere lecturer, and ultimately into a fossil. If he have that fitness, the fuller his training the greater will be his power for good in the world. No power in this world can make a preacher, but if God have first made the aspirant one, no equipment can be too great for so high an office.

It will have been seen from Mr. Allon's deliberate change to the Congregational order from the Wesleyan that his choice of the Congregational ministry in preference to any other was a matter of deep conviction. It may now be mentioned, since all the persons whose knowledge could make it a matter of confidence are dead, that it was also a matter of some sacrifice. A wealthy lady, representative of one of the old families of the neighbourhood of his native village, urged him to enter the Church of England, promising not only to defray all the expenses of a university course, but also to secure to him the reversion of a good living which was in her gift. He gave, as he was of course bound to do, respectful consideration to so generous an offer, the strong claims of which would not be lessened by the fact that his father was a member and, for some time, a churchwarden of the Church of England. Amongst other difficulties, however, he found himself unable to subscribe to some of the Articles of the Anglican Church; and the answer he gave was that he felt it right to follow his own strong convictions. To the end his loyalty to those convictions did not

swerve. Though recognising the greatness of the Church of England, and on terms of the most cordial friendliness with many of its most distinguished clergymen, a friendliness sometimes misunderstood by those who did not know him, he remained always a firm and loyal Nonconformist, never regretting the intelligent and deliberate choice which he had made in early life. He based his choice of Congregationalism, he declared at his ordination, upon its purity of membership, its voluntarism, its freedom in choice of ministers and officers, and in form of worship, and "because its ministers are not required to subscribe to any human interpretation of the Word of God."

Having thus made his choice, such help as he needed was not wanting in order to prepare himself for college. He went for about a year to the house of the Rev. Alexander Stewart, at High Barnet, assisting him in a school which he conducted there, and himself preparing for his entrance into Cheshunt College. During that period he preached in the neighbourhood, and for a while took charge of a village station, and in due course was admitted a student. The years at Cheshunt were years of great happiness and continual industry. He always manifested the deepest possible affection for his alma mater, and tried in every way in his power to pay his debt of gratitude by working on behalf of the college, and securing for it the sympathy and help of others. He was one of its most distinguished alumni; and no estimate of his life could be complete without due recognition of the part which Cheshunt College played in the formation of his ministerial character.

From every point of view the history of Cheshunt is one of great interest. It is one of the abiding monuments of a great movement and of a useful life. That masterful reformer and pious woman, Selina Countess of Huntingdon, has left no greater monument of her own foresight and real earnestness than Cheshunt College. When, seeing the need for earnest and godly preachers, she opened the college at Trevecca, and placed it under the charge of the holy Fletcher of Madeley, there was commenced an institution of almost unique usefulness.

There has been at the college, throughout its history, a succession of wise and good men who have left their stamp upon students whom they have trained; and, if it has not produced a large number of very distinguished preachers, it has certainly maintained a record of useful and earnest ministers, serving in many different branches of the Christian Church. The preparation which the Countess made for the continuance of the college after her death showed both shrewdness and catholicity. The property is vested in seven trustees; the doctrinal standard is in fifteen selected Articles of the Church of England, and the students are free to accept any sphere which may offer for Christian service and preaching. Though the Connexion itself has somewhat decreased, and its future is not likely to be of great importance, here, at least, has been preserved a vital source of light and influence.

The locality of Cheshunt, as well as its history, is an inspiration. Standing amidst interesting royal associations, it still preserves much of the beauty



which must first have made it a place of royal resort. Placed in the midst—in the very midst—of one of the richest rose-growing districts, and in its quiet lanes and old cottages full of suggestions of the past, it is well suited for the quiet and healthy preparation for a great life-work. Its proximity to London gives to its students an opportunity of mingling now and again in the highest religious life of their day, and of becoming known to churches which may require the services of ministers. The group of village churches round about Cheshunt gives to them also occasions for preaching and for pastoral work which must afterwards be of inestimable value to them; for the man who cannot speak to a village congregation is not fit to speak upon spiritual subjects to any congregation anywhere. In addition to these advantages, the college at Cheshunt has always preserved a high tone of spiritual life. In the midst of all these advantages, then, was the student life of Henry Allon spent.

In his studies he was most diligent, and at one time during his college course came very near permanently damaging his health through excessive work. How seriously he regarded the work of intellectual preparation for the ministry is illustrated by the fact—simple in itself—that he would refer to the special commendation which Dr. Hamilton publicly gave to him after some examination, as one of the pleasantest and most encouraging facts of his early career. The course of instruction, though shorter in those days than it is now, was, as a glance at the examination papers will show, of a high order, and

covered wide ground, and no man could pass through it without hard and conscientious study.

Those were not the least palmy days of Cheshunt College; and such men as Dr. Harris, Philip Smith, and W. Sortain, with his strange, wild rush of eloquent speech, were a guarantee of the character of its teaching.

Into the village preaching, as well as into study, Mr. Allon threw himself with energy; the interest then formed he continued to show until the end, and nothing delighted him more in late years than to be identified with an anniversary or a scheme for improvement or rebuilding in any of the chapels round about Cheshunt. His affection for his college was boundless, and no event of the year was to him of greater pleasure than its annual festival, which he attended for fifty years with scarcely a break.

His college course, short as it would in any case have been, was made shorter by the illness of Dr. Harris, the Principal, and, coincident with that, an event which was to have the largest effect upon his career—his call to the co-pastorate of Union Chapel, Islington. The Rev. Thomas Lewis, who had been pastor from 1802, had, in 1835, asked for the services of a colleague, and for a while was joined by the Rev. John Watson. Mr. Watson's health, however, gave way, and it became needful to look for a successor. For a while the search was fruitless, but in 1843 inquiry was made of Dr. Harris whether he had amongst his students any who would be capable of occasionally supplying the pulpit of Union Chapel. There was one student of whose piety and

ability Dr. Harris had the highest possible opinion, and of whom he had prophesied that "if he have health and strength he will outstrip us all." Accordingly, on the 4th of June Henry Allon preached for the first time in Union Chapel, which was to be for nearly half a century the scene of his labours, and to which his spiritual and enlightened ministry was to give a position of rare importance.

No better account can be given of the origin and early history of Union Chapel than that contained in the brief and clear statement which was deposited in 1876 under the memorial-stone of the present building:—

"Union Chapel had its origin in the spontaneous association of a few earnest and devout men, in part Episcopalians, and in part Nonconformists, who sought for themselves—the former a more evangelical ministry than at that time could be found in the parish church, and the latter some provision for evangelical worship in addition to the two Nonconformist chapels then existing in Islington. After worshipping together for about two years they formed themselves into an organised church, consisting of twenty-six members, and secured as a chapel a building in Highbury Grove, now the dwelling-house No. 18. Shortly after this the Rev. Thomas Lewis, who had occasionally ministered to them during the previous two years, was invited to become their pastor.

"The ordination of Mr. Lewis took place in Orange Street Chapel, Leicester Square, in 1804.

"In August, 1806, the Church and congregation removed to the chapel in Compton Terrace, which they had erected. On the 30th of that month it was opened for Divine worship by the Rev. Henry Gauntlett, late Vicar of Olney, and by the Rev. Dr. Bogue, of Gosport.



“It was called Union Chapel, to indicate the union in its worshippers of Episcopalians and Nonconformists. The Liturgy of the Church of England was used in the morning, and extempore prayer, after the manner of Nonconformists, in the evening.

“The Lord’s Supper was also administered in two modes, the Episcopalian members of the Church receiving it at the Communion table; the Nonconformist members administered from pew to pew.”

This simple statement involves, of course, a great deal more than it expresses. The necessity for such a movement is a light upon the spiritual condition of England at the end of last century and the beginning of this. It was the time of the first awakening from the spiritual sleep of many years. The outermost waves of the evangelical revival were beginning to be felt, and in all the sects there were evidences of quickened life. Not only within the borders of the sects themselves, but in the coming together of the more spiritual men of all communions, was there evidence of this fuller life.

There was a growing sense of the folly of the privileged position which was claimed by certain official representatives of the Established Church. Bishop Horsley and his school could not surely be acknowledged as the only true representatives of Christ upon earth. The mere fact that in the first years of this century it was seriously contemplated by a great statesman to suppress village preaching and to close Sunday schools shows how jealously any spiritual activity which was not in official channels was regarded. More attention would be paid to a drunken

sporting priest who kept within the conventional bounds than to any spiritual man who in his zeal exceeded those bounds. With some great and notable exceptions the clergy of that day were in a wretched condition—drunken, racing, and non-resident. Men like Newton and Simeon were in striking contrast to the general order. It was natural that the Evangelicals of all sections should recognise their essential unity, and seek to act together for their own purposes. Thus in 1795 the London Missionary Society was formed by representatives of Evangelical Churchmen, Scotch Presbyterians, Calvinistic Methodists, and Congregationalists. Again, in 1804 the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society is a witness to the same spirit in the Churches.

The foundation of Union Chapel was a local result of that evangelical movement. Islington, with its numberless churches of to-day, possessed then only the parish church and the chapel-of-ease, and nowhere was there such provision as the more spiritual section of the people would desire. The village (one full of interest, both to the student of literature and to the Nonconformist) felt the force of the same influences which were at work without; and the little church meeting first in 1799—not 1802, as was stated in the document quoted above—was only a microcosm of larger and more public movements.

For nearly half a century the union of the Episcopal and Nonconformist elements was maintained, though the tendency of the congregation was to become more and more exclusively Nonconformist,

the spiritual awakening within the Church of England enabling those who desired a home within the Establishment to find it there. During that period there was a general improvement in moral and religious life, and in an interesting sermon which Mr. Lewis preached in 1842, he gives, in a review of forty years' pastorate, a cheerful account of the continuous progress of the village. At the beginning of that period, Islington, he says, "was involved in the grossest ignorance and wickedness," but gradually that stain was removed. Many new churches and chapels were built; two large training colleges—one Episcopal and one Independent—were opened within the parish, and Sunday and day schools were multiplied. Union Chapel became an increasingly important centre of philanthropic and religious activity, and such societies as the Benevolent, the Maternal, and the Tract societies, started quite early in the century, are still in full activity.

In indirect ways also the influence of the church's life began to be felt. The London City Mission was started in the second quarter of the century by David Nasmyth, then a member at Union Chapel. The educational movement which must be for ever, in spite of narrow attempts at disparagement, associated with the name of Joseph Lancaster, found ready sympathy in the congregation of Union Chapel. Day schools were erected, and for many years carried on by the congregation, such children as needed it being clothed as well as taught at the cost of the congregation.

For forty years, then, Mr. Lewis had held the growingly important position of sole pastor of



the church, with the short interval of Mr. John Watson's co-pastorate. Mr. Lewis was a man of great amiability and goodness, though of inferior intellectual strength to many of his contemporaries; but the affection and respect which he inspired enabled him to fill a position of some difficulty through many years with scarcely a jar or disagreement.

To share in this work Henry Allon was ultimately called, and his great place in its after development can only be understood by thus recalling its beginnings. His first preaching produced so favourable an impression that he was asked again and yet again. He occupied the pulpit during the whole of August, 1843, in the pastor's absence, and in September a most hearty and unanimous invitation was sent to him by the church and congregation; and on the first Sunday of the following year he entered upon his duties as junior pastor of the church.

There are few more delicate relationships than that which exists between two co-pastors, and in this case it was found to be not without its difficulties and trials. The danger does not lie so much with the pastors themselves as in the zeal and indiscretions of their friends. If they could only be left alone to solve the problem by their own mutual confidence and co-operation there would be little difficulty; but good people, who mean no harm in the world, are apt to believe the old minister slighted, or the young minister oppressed, when no such thought has been in the mind of either. Such dangers from without were not wanting in this case, but Mr. Allon's wisdom and

self-control were constantly manifested, and by their means the many difficulties incident to the position were met and successfully overcome. He entered upon his duties in January, 1844, and continued co-pastor until the death of Mr. Lewis in February, 1852.

## CHAPTER II.

## A SUCCESSFUL PASTORATE.

It was in the June of 1844 that Mr. Allon was publicly ordained to the Christian ministry. The ordination service was not only impressive in itself, but derived an added significance from the fact that it was practically the public recognition of the change which had gradually been transforming the church from its original character to one that was purely Congregationalist. Dr. Bennett gave the introductory address in exposition of Congregational principles; Mr. Henry Spicer told the story of the movement which had led to the presentation of the call; and Mr. Allon gave very full expression to his personal faith in Christ and conscious call to His ministry, as well as to his views of Church polity and Church doctrine. The ordination prayer was offered by Mr. Sherman, and the charge to the minister delivered by Dr. Harris, whose relation to Mr. Allon was almost that of father to son.

Thus much would suffice for account of this service did it not supply a striking illustration of one quality which was supremely characteristic of Mr. Allon—his openness of mind and his capacity for growth. While, speaking generally, his place must be fixed amongst the moderate Evangelicals, nothing in his history is more manifest than his broadening of view and development of creed.



Though generally throughout his ministry ranked amongst the orthodox, he was yet especially sensitive to the effects of the latest knowledge and research. He did not mistake modes of apprehending and expressing truth for the truth itself; but, amidst all the changes of thought and of utterance, he held firmly to what he believed to be the great essential truths of the Christian faith.

To those who had the privilege of being taught by him in the later years of his ministry, the following extracts from his ordination statement will prove suggestive. They indicate both the truths which were present in his teaching to the end and also those doctrines and methods of stating truth which he either abandoned or greatly modified :—

“ I believe that God requires of all men repentance and faith as the means of their obtaining an actual and personal interest in the salvation thus rendered available for all ; and also that the influences of the Holy Spirit are necessary to produce these by removing the enmity of heart to spiritual truth. I believe that none would embrace God's offer of mercy unless inclined to do so by the Holy Spirit. His great work, therefore, I conceive to be the removal of the natural aversion to Divine truth. Those to whom the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit are given are in Scripture called the elect ; by which, as I understand, that as these influences are given by a special act of God, and are of sovereign bestowment, they are given as the result of a Divine determination to give them, for a wise Being never acts without an intelligent purpose ; and as all God's purposes are eternal, His purpose to give the Holy Spirit is eternal also ; those to whom He thus eternally purposed to give the Holy Spirit being called the elect—chosen to this

special grace—not for any inherent accidental difference in them, but by the sovereign pleasure of God. . . . I believe that the elect, thus foreknown and predestinated, are led by the Holy Spirit to comply with the requirements of the Gospel, and to repent of sin, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to strive after and practise holiness. That when they believe they are justified, by which I understand not only that their sins are forgiven, but that they are treated as if they had never sinned, all that by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. . . . And from the nature of the new birth, as also from the unchangeableness of the Divine nature and purposes, and from the explicit statement of God's will, I believe in the assured perseverance of all who are truly born again to eternal life."

Though these words have the ring of the definite theology in which he had been trained, it is impossible not to trace in them the evidences of a reserve—the reserve of an original and independent mind under forms of expression which had been rather received as traditions than created out of personal thought. The closing sentences of the statement, about to be quoted, were prophetic of what actually took place in his intellectual history—the growth into larger outlooks of one who never ceased to be loyal to what he conceived to be the central truths of Christianity. There was too much real reverence and personal piety in his life to allow him lightly to regard truths which had been to him the source of so much spiritual strength and inspiration; but side by side with that there was the openness to truth of a strong and original mind. The noblest conservatism in the history of religion is in personal loyalty of

character, the truest progressiveness is in the teachable mind.

"This is an outline," the statement concluded, "of what I consider the Bible to teach, as far as I now understand it; but respecting many truths, perhaps respecting most, my opinions are necessarily crude and immature. I trust, however, that by maintaining a humble and teachable mind, and by constantly seeking the teachings of God's Holy Spirit, I shall be kept from serious error, and shall be enabled to declare to those among whom I minister what is the mind of the Spirit."

It is that attitude of mind which pre-eminently qualifies a man to be a helper of others, and which enabled Mr. Allon to be a spiritual and intellectual guide to many who were perplexed and in need of sympathetic and wise treatment. The mere utterance of dogmas unchanged from year to year in any single letter of their expression, may present an appearance of great loyalty to truth, but the wise and helpful teacher, who shall guide strong souls over the rough and miry places, must for himself have learned how to apprehend truth, and express in the language of personal conviction the truths which he has to teach. There is no teaching so truly inspired as that which has been burned into the soul of a man by the fires of conflict through which he himself has passed. Growth through conflict is the law of the Christian life, and evidence of such growth was conspicuously present in the teaching of Henry Allon.

It has been said that the tendency of the life of the church worshipping in Union Chapel had been more and more towards simple Congregationalism.



This fact was recognised very soon after Mr. Allon's settlement. The advent of the Rev. Daniel Wilson to Islington parish church had been the commencement of a new and more active life in the Episcopal Church, and the attendance of Episcopalian worshippers at Union Chapel was naturally constantly decreasing. The settlement of Mr. Allon was felt to be a fitting opportunity for giving final effect to the necessities which this change had produced, and within a comparatively short time the use of the Liturgy, which had obtained from the beginning, was discontinued, and the Lord's Supper, which had been observed in the two forms used by Episcopalians and Independents severally, was thenceforth observed in the Nonconformist method only. From that time Union Chapel became practically what it has since remained, a Congregational church, though it has always preserved its character for catholicity and its sympathy with all kinds of religious activity. In connection with this change Dr. Allon's own views of the value of extempore prayer may be of interest. He says: "It is neither the prayer of dead men, nor a past inspiration of the Spirit; it may be homely, but it is the expression of a present, living experience; it is the immediate teaching of the Spirit of Truth that dwelleth in the man. Shall the Church presume to ordain that the Spirit shall never inspire another prayer for public worship? Use the past, by all means, but not so as to forbid the inspirations of the present. Past prayers may be useful, as past hymns are, but both in prayers and in hymns we should be prepared to welcome every fresh inspiration of the living Spirit."

In his conduct of public worship there was no more striking feature than the beauty and reverence of his prayers. He seemed to enter into the very presence of God, and those who were in spiritual sympathy with the purposes of the worship always found in him a true leader in the act of prayer. Dignified in expression and deeply reverent in spirit, his prayers were always a refreshment and an inspiration.

In 1848 Mr. Allon was married, at Bluntisham, to Eliza, the eldest daughter of Joseph Goodman, Esq., of Witton, Huntingdonshire, Mr. Lewis officiating at the ceremony. Miss Goodman was connected with a family which was—and is still—doing prominent service to Nonconformity. Of her place in Mr. Allon's life something is said later. Let it suffice to say here, that to intimate friends he always spoke with deepest gratitude of the great help and joy which his marriage had brought to him.

Mr. and Mrs. Allon took a house in Canonbury, and there, with some necessary enlargement, they continued to live until his death. In later years Dr. Allon would sometimes say, half jestingly, but with real gratitude, that he had had "one wife, one home, one church." He could not, perhaps, have retained the third so long if the first and second had not been so helpful to him.

But little need be said of the co-pastorate. On the whole it was a history of slow but sure progress. At one time the church seemed to be in some peril of division. The young minister was becoming increasingly a favourite, while the influence of the



older was a little waning, and there was some fear lest, through the unwisdom of friends, the church which had successfully lived through discussions so serious as those concerning the alteration in church government and in order of service, should now suffer because of mere indiscretions. But happily, the spirit of forbearance and of peace prevailed, and when Mr. Lewis died all traces of the temporary danger had passed away.

Mr. Allon at once took his place as sole pastor, and from that time onward the record of his ministry is one of increasing and rarely interrupted success. He had already become well known in London, and now he began to be ranked as one of its acknowledged preachers. In 1852 he was invited to give one of the Exeter Hall lectures in connection with the Young Men's Christian Association, taking his turn with men like Thomas Binney, Gilfillan, Baptist Noel, and others. The subject which he chose was characteristic, entitled, "Christianity in its Relation to Sects and Denominations." And in the lecture he pleaded, as he always pleaded, for recognition of the one great spiritual relationship to Christ as the only essential to the Christian life.

In 1853 the church at Union Chapel added to its already vigorous Home Mission organisations. Since 1836 a ragged school and mission had been conducted in Spitalfields, and afterwards in Bethnal Green, through the inspiration and labours of Mr. J. Duthoit, a descendant of the Huguenots, with the desire to benefit the weavers who were settled there. That mission grew in importance, and has yet among

its many agencies one of the largest ragged schools in London. To its operations Dr. Allon always referred with lawful pride. Its early morning breakfasts for poor children, its numberless agencies for the good of the district, were the outcome of the life of the church at Union Chapel; and though in late years he was not able very often to be present at its meetings, he was full of gratitude for the good which it was doing, and had perfect confidence in those who conducted its affairs. His hatred of all self-advertisement often led to the idea outside that his church was not missionary in spirit. No church in London has done more mission and social work in proportion to its size, and some movements which have recently been announced as novel have been for years in existence in connection with Dr. Allon's work.

Not satisfied, however, with this one active agency, in 1853, as has been said, a new mission or branch church was commenced on the borders of Hoxton, and quickly became a centre of great usefulness. Just at that period the whole Christian Church in England was greatly exercised upon the question of the public attendance upon acts of worship. A religious census had been taken in 1851. The results were not published until 1854, but the facts were startling. It was found that more than five million persons who might be present at public worship were absent, and all sections of the Church began to ask why. Mr. Samuel Morley at once summoned a conference of leading Nonconformists, and a discussion was aroused which undoubtedly heralded a new interest and activity in Home Mission work. The evangelical

section of the Church of England, led by Lord Shaftesbury, agitated for a repeal of the Conventicle Act. The Bill passed the Commons ; but the Lords first rejected, and afterwards mutilated it. In spite of that opposition, however, so much freedom was gained that it was possible to commence a series of united services in Exeter Hall. Great crowds gathered ; but by one of those ridiculous claims of authority which the Church of England seems determined to preserve for the use of intolerant men, the incumbent of the parish forbade his brother clergymen to dare to preach to men within his sacred enclosure. At once some leading Nonconformists, Mr. Allon amongst them, offered their services, and for a while the meetings were continued.

Though Mr. Allon never cultivated what is vulgarly known as the popular style in preaching, yet no one could on occasion speak with greater effect at meetings such as these. His preparation was always full and laborious. For many years he wrote every sermon twice before preaching it ; but that very fact gave him a command of style which, when he was called upon to speak in ways somewhat out of his ordinary routine, made him the more effective. Many who heard him frequently believed that he had powers for mere popular address which, had he cultivated them, would have given to him a more distinct place in popular estimation ; but those very powers which other men are tempted to cultivate for applause he deliberately sought to suppress, as unworthy of his ideal of what a Christian teacher should be.

In the last years of his life, coming from a political



meeting at which a speech of his had been received with great enthusiasm, he said, jokingly, to a friend, "I believe I shall make a demagogue yet." It would, perhaps, be an impertinence to express the wish that he had a little more freely used his powers in that direction; it is, at least, allowable to bear witness to their existence. Having these powers, there was, at least, no ecclesiastical barrier in the way of their use; and it is surely a matter of some suggestiveness to those who occupy the high places in the official Church of this land that such men as Henry Allon, of the irregular forces, were free to preach wherever men were willing to hear them, while then our clergy were (and are still, though to a less extent) bound by the arbitrary limitations of humanly devised organisations. Imagine Christ being hindered from preaching on the sea-shore because it was somebody else's parish!

In 1855, and during some time following, there was raging a controversy which had more significance as a sign of the times than from any question immediately involved. The Rev. T. Lynch, a Congregational minister of great personal piety and refinement, had, during an illness, written a number of hymns, which were published under the title of "The Rivulet." The editor of the *Morning Advertiser*—Mr. Grant—a paper representing the Evangelicals and the licensed victuallers, attacked the book viciously, denying that the poems showed "any evidence whatever either of vital religion or evangelical piety." As the attack continued and increased in bitterness, fifteen London ministers, who knew Mr. Lynch well,

and greatly respected and loved him, issued a protest utterly repudiating any sympathy with the attack. Mr. Allon was one of these—certainly not the least active. By alphabetical arrangement his name stood first in the list of those who signed the protest; and of the ministers who acted with him there still remain the Revs. Newman Hall, J. C. Harrison, Dr. Newth, John Nunn, and Edward White. The champion of evangelical orthodoxy, Dr. Campbell, of the *Christian Witness* and the *British Banner*, of course rushed into the fray, exaggerating the issues, and declaring of this controversy that “nothing like it had occurred within the memory of the present generation, or, perhaps, since the days of the Reformation.” For two years the battle raged in various ways, and the feelings aroused were most bitter and cruel. Mr. Lynch’s defenders were suspected of sympathy with his heresies; and Lord Shaftesbury, whose practical sympathies were so much wider than his theological views, spoke of the horrid epidemic which had seized upon some of our brightest Nonconformist divines.

In all this conflict and suspicion Mr. Allon had his full share. Within his own church, as well as without, he had to face the misrepresentation which his attitude had brought upon him. He had more to lose than some with whom he acted, but he was fearless, then and always, when his convictions were thoroughly aroused, and was willing to stand side by side on the pillory with one whom he believed to be wrongly treated. The position which he took in replying to one prominent objector is worth briefly quoting. He says: “I believe that Lynch has been falsely



accused and unfairly treated, and as a man and a Christian I must say so. Whether it were wise or not to meddle in the controversy is another thing, but even folly in defence of an injured man is a failing that leans to virtue's side. I could forgive people generally for suspecting Lynch, through the oddity and mistiness of his style; but this is no excuse for a critic, much less is it for garbled quotations. . . . It is sad, indeed, if we cannot discuss differing opinions without alienated feelings."

After a while the storm died away, having cleared the air. But conflicts such as this leave scars, which remain long after the questions at issue have been forgotten. Perhaps the doubt, slightly expressed in the letter, whether it was wise to play into the hands of the editor of the *Advertiser* by taking any notice of his attack, will be shared by those who to-day recall the controversy. But, after all Christ's protestations against the tyranny of the letter, it is marvellous that nothing in the world will produce so much bitterness and cruel injustice as a dispute about the meaning of this letter or that, and amid all the suspiciousness of narrow-minded people no man of any independence of thought can hope to escape. It is no small testimony to the vigour of Dr. Allon's thought that while now and again he was suspected and accused of sitting in the seat of the heretical, the impression left by his whole life is that of an orthodox and loyal servant of Christ.

Those who heard him in later years could hardly, perhaps, believe possible such an attack as Dr. Campbell made upon him for the sermon which he preached

before the London Missionary Society a few years later. That redoubtable champion had never forgiven him for his action in the Lynch controversy, and now declared him to be the greatest of the neologists. Mr. Allon wisely, however, took no notice whatever of the attack.

It was during this early period of his sole pastorate that Mr. Allon began to find it possible to give practical expression to his strong sense of the importance of music in worship. When first he went to Union Chapel the psalmody, according to his own account, was musically at zero. There was no choir, and the congregation was led by a precentor, an old man of seventy. The Union tune-book was used, and Rippon's and Watts's hymn books. The first step in psalmody reform was taken in 1846 or 1847, when the Congregational hymn-book, which had recently been compiled by Conder, was adopted. In 1852 Dr. Gauntlett, who had for a little while been conductor of a psalmody class which had been commenced, and who had been introduced to the Church by Mr. Puttick, the secretary of the Sacred Harmonic Society, became organist also, and did the double duty until 1861. The psalmody class, which has continued to prosper since 1847, has had great effect upon the congregational worship, besides giving performances during each winter of two or three oratorios, when collections are taken for local charities. The changes made were undoubtedly for the better; but Mr. Allon soon found that the musical provision in the tune-books then extant was quite insufficient for the purposes of a worship which could in any sense be called ideal. He

began to form a larger collection of tunes, intending them to be supplementary to the "Congregational Psalmist;" but when about one hundred tunes were ready, he decided to publish them as a separate collection. They form Part I. of the "Congregational Psalmist."

About the same time he published a book of chants, the congregation commencing to use chanting in worship—then almost unknown in Nonconformist chapels—in 1856 or 1857. Not, however, until 1859 was the choir formed. The history of all this is easy to tell, but was not so easy to make. Any suggestions by the young minister which seemed to show any disrespect to the traditions of the past would be regarded with suspicion; and nowhere have Mr. Allon's wisdom and patience been more clearly manifested than in the way in which those alterations were suggested and carried out. His method was always to seek to convince the people of the desirability of any proposal which he had to make, until they themselves would become active in its advocacy. For want of such discretion innumerable troubles in churches have arisen, and in all sections of the Christian Church the only real strength must lie in securing the goodwill and hearty co-operation of the congregation generally. During all his ministry at Union Chapel Dr. Allon aimed at, and succeeded in securing, that goodwill.

The next few years were years of quiet and steady advance, and in 1859 the congregation felt that it was time they should make some recognition of their pastor's work. So successfully had he laboured that



the local paper said of him, "Probably there are few men in the parish of Islington (the largest in England) more widely known, or more universally esteemed; the eloquence of his preaching, the kindliness of his disposition, and the earnestness with which he prosecutes his work, are well known to all who are acquainted with him." A movement was commenced in the congregation for the presentation of a testimonial; the sum of two hundred and fifty guineas was subscribed, part of which was spent upon a handsome timepiece, and the rest presented to Mr. Allon. In acknowledging the gift and the uniform kindness and consideration which the congregation had continually shown to him, he made some reference to his sixteen years of association with them. He spoke then, as he always spoke, with great gratitude of the loyal service of the congregation, and of the helpfulness and wise sympathy of the deacons. "Our history has been that most blessed of all histories, in which no events have to be recorded—a continuous course of quiet, uneventful, and continuous prosperity; never greater, perhaps, than at the present moment—the church gradually filled, and for some years our chief difficulty has been want of accommodation." The membership of the church had increased from 318 to 693, and its contribution for evangelical purposes, apart from its own ministry, had doubled. Two mission stations had been opened, and, amongst other religious agencies, Bible classes, which had been very successful, sometimes numbering as many as 250 members.

"I have seen many changes among you during



these sixteen years ; some of you I have seen growing rich, and some—once rich—I have seen grow poor ; dark clouds driven across summer skies, the wintry wind of poverty biting keenly where the summer breeze of prosperity once whispered. Some of you I knew first in budding youth, life in its spring all gay and verdant to you ; then conjugal ties were formed, and now children climb your knees, and life has brought its cares ; and some of you I have seen sink into the decrepitude of old age, waiting only for the summons that must soon come. I have seen many a household circle broken, many a hearth left cold, many a roof-tree fall ; great changes in home and heart do sixteen years bring.”

These words are characteristic. Mr. Allon’s pastoral relationship was not that of the busybody type—in and out of the people’s houses in season and out of season ; but at all times of real need and trouble no sympathy could be more tender, no counsel wiser. What was true at the end of sixteen years was still truer at the end of forty-eight years, and unbounded evidence was given after his death of the remarkable way in which his ministry had been bound up with all that was most sacred in the personal and family life of many members of his congregation. His real tenderness was not always appreciated. One minister who knew him well, said that if he had to choose in time of great trouble between seeking advice of Dr. Allon and of a minister in London whose name was almost a synonym for tenderness and sympathy, he should without hesitation have gone to Dr. Allon ; not because he doubted the

tenderness of the other, but because he felt Dr. Allon's to be that highest form of tenderness, the tenderness of strength.

The fact to which the pastor had called attention of the overcrowded state of his church had become of pressing importance, and the congregation resolved upon the enlargement of the chapel. A generous response was made to the appeal, and the work was accomplished, many more sittings being added.

It is memorable that this year of 1861 is that also in which the great Metropolitan Tabernacle was opened, and a ministry commenced there which was in striking contrast with that of Dr. Allon, although each had its own place in the needful evangelising forces of London. There is no commoner, but no profounder error than to suppose that the only evangelisation is that which is known as of the revivalist type. A thoughtful, progressive ministry may affect numerically fewer; but will probably, through the quality of those whom it affects, produce results quite as great. Union Chapel was always remarkable for the number of thoughtful and intelligent men who found there a spiritual home. If such men were inspired for Christian life and service, the effect of the ministry cannot be stated in numbers. Who shall measure spiritual force, or what part of the spiritual body shall boast itself over another part?

It was about the year 1860 that Mr. Allon began systematic writing and reviewing for religious journals, though he had, of course, done some fugitive writing before that date. He wrote largely for the

*Patriot*, then under the editorship of Mr. T. C. Turberville. His articles and reviews for that first year covered a wide ground, as may be seen from the following subjects:—"Berkeley's Theory of Vision," "Conference on Missions," "Hannah More's Letters," "Vaughan on the Revision of the Liturgy," etc. It was this constant habit of reviewing which gave to his conversation and preaching so much of its literary charm.

As education goes to-day, his preparation for the ministry had not been great. He had been to no public school or university, and his college course, much less effective then than now, had been cut short by his call to Union Chapel; but by constant and varied reading, and reading often with the special purpose of reviewing, his strong memory soon became a storehouse of much general literary information; information which his self-confidence enabled him always to have at command. In the academic sense he was not a scholar, but in the possession of literary knowledge and power he had few superiors. If his literary work took some time from his church, its members certainly regained something in the breadth and freedom of style which it brought to his preaching.

About this time Mr. Allon's life was darkened by an occurrence which left its mark upon all his after history—the loss of what was then his only son, a bright boy of four years old. A very tender memory was left in his life, which would sometimes, in spite of himself, make itself seen, and any reference to the loss of children would set the wound bleeding afresh; very often the tears in the voice would reveal the



inward thought which was with him. The year 1863 also witnessed the death of his mother, one of those good, devoted women who dedicate all their strength to the loyal discharge of the duties of motherhood, and whose reward is often found in the strong and useful life of some members of their family.

In 1863 he published a volume of memoirs of James Sherman, the distinguished Independent minister, a considerable part of the volume being founded upon Mr. Sherman's own autobiography. He was happily provided with sufficient materials, and out of them produced a volume which is not only a clear picture of the life whose story it tells, but which manifests a large-sighted and sympathetic knowledge of contemporary life.

An instance, slight in itself, but significant as a revelation of character, and as indicating his independence of judgment, when judgment was convinced, occurred about this time in connection with the Shakspeare Tercentenary Committee. The good minister who, finding a quotation from Shakspeare suitable to his theme, prefaced his use of it by saying, "As one has said whom I will not name in this pulpit," was only a type of many. Some of these good souls were greatly offended that the name of Allon should be found upon the list of the committee for celebrating the tercentenary, and in local circles there arose something like a squall of controversy. But a man understanding the claims of literature and Shakspeare's place in them could hardly refuse to join in such a national recognition.

The religiousness of Shakspeare is now matter of



common acknowledgment, but we owe something to the men who had the courage to recognise it in days when it was less clearly seen by religious men than now. Mr. Allon stood between praise and blame; but the praise was in some quarters qualified by the reproach that he did not carry his championship of Shakspeare to the extent of attending the theatre, a deprivation which, for conscientious reasons, he always imposed upon himself, though to others he allowed full liberty of judgment.

## CHAPTER III.

## A MANY-SIDED ACTIVITY.

IN 1864 there was given unmistakable proof of the position which Mr. Allon had gained in the estimation of his brethren in the Congregational ministry. The Rev. Joshua Harrison had been chosen as chairman of the Congregational Union for the year. A severe attack of illness made it impossible for him to fulfil the duties of the position. Mr. Allon was therefore chosen to fill his place, and at the comparatively early age of forty-five reached the highest position which his own fellow-ministers had to offer him. For the subject of his inaugural address he chose "The Christ, the Book, and the Church," declaring his intention to take a wider than any mere denominational outlook, and to speak of the things that vitally affect the whole Catholic Church of Christ. His remarks upon the Book—the Bible—were not received favourably everywhere, and some good but narrow souls were scandalised. He declared that the theory of verbal inspiration was untenable, and showed how the defence of that theory was to put a powerful weapon into the hands of the enemy. One very prominent layman, in the discussion which was in those days allowed after the chairman's address, but has now been suppressed, rose and said that, after listening to that address he felt

he had been robbed of a dear friend, and should leave the hall with a poorer Bible than he had brought in with him. But many have found since then that it is that poverty which has made them rich, and that only by unlearning superstitious ideas of truth have they come to appreciate the real value and Divine inspiration of the Bible. Amongst the most earnest of his defenders in the discussion was Mr. Guinness Rogers, then a young minister in London, whose attitude greatly touched Mr. Allon, and was remembered with gratitude to the day of his death.

Upon the question of the Church also he spoke plainly, demanding that whilst every attempt should be made to secure ecclesiastical freedom, the Non-conformist ministry must vindicate its claims by its character, its culture, and its labours. It was indicative of Mr. Allon's breadth of view that he could not at such a time narrow his words to any mere denominational question. The Colenso controversy had been raging for some time; it was the year also of the publication of "Essays and Reviews;" and the excitement which "Ecce Homo" had produced had not yet died away. The ecclesiastical discussions resulting from the bi-centenary celebrations of 1662 were still troubling the sea, and casting up mire, one of the latest symptoms being the quarrel of Mr. Spurgeon with the Evangelical Alliance.

Though the address may not have greatly enlarged the sphere of the discussion, it was yet a manifestation of the largeness of thought and breadth of view which were always characteristic of Mr. Allon. It is an instance also of the high-water mark of the

thought of the broader Nonconformist ministry of that day, and as such the address has been included in this volume.

After the labours of his year of office were over, arrangements were made by which he was able to join a party of ministers and others to visit Palestine. Dr. Stoughton and Dr. Bright are the two ministerial survivors of the party.

Mr. Allon was peculiarly qualified for the rich enjoyment which a journey to the East can bring to the reverent student. His great physical strength enabled him to endure fatigues and inconveniences as a good many of his fellow-travellers could not, and his bent of mind prepared him to be a close observer of the numberless facts of interest which such a journey could present. One of the survivors of the party vividly remembers his intense enjoyment of the whole journey, and the cheerfulness and wealth of conversation which made him a delightful companion. He sent home voluminous letters, full of exact and interesting description; but in these days of many books upon the Holy Land it is not needful to give more than one or two references.

Nothing in the whole journey seems to have impressed him more than the days which were spent in the district about Sinai. Of Sinai itself he says, "There is, perhaps, no place that inspires so much reverent awe, the associations of which are so thrilling, the power of which is so subduing." He contrasts the loneliness of Sinai with the crowded surroundings and altered character of many places associated with the life of Christ—Jerusalem, in which "almost



every trace of His sacred footsteps is obliterated ;” Gethsemane, degraded into “a trim and gravelled garden, with gaudy flowers in partitioned beds, and fancy palings around its venerable olives ;” the Mount of Olives, “the suburb of a great city ;” but the peaks of Sinai are “as when the lightnings of Jehovah enwrapped them.”

But though what he saw of Sinai impressed him so deeply, there were, of course, more sacred associations still to a Christian minister ; and his letter of March 31st begins with these exulting words : “The dream of my life is realised, and I have been permitted to enter the gates of Jerusalem, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.”

Of a communion service which he attended in the church at Mount Zion, he says : “To me it was indescribably affecting to break bread in Jerusalem, so near to the spot where Christ partook of the last Passover with His disciples, and instituted the Lord’s Supper.” Those who recall the deep spiritual reverence which he always manifested in the observance of the Lord’s Supper will appreciate the intensity of his feeling. After walking round the city he declares, “Our impressions of the beauty and grandeur of the city were greatly enhanced. I know no city to be compared with it. Jerusalem is literally ‘beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.’” With all travellers, too, he felt the tremendous distance between the real associations of Jerusalem and the lying legends which abound in it.

A visit was, of course, made to Bethlehem ; and, after speaking of the monkish legends which abound

there also, he adds: "But that we were near the spot, in the very village, and possibly on the place where Christ was born, and near which the wondrous star rested, we all felt; and that was enough. With throbbing hearts we felt that here was the greatest birth of time."

The letters abound with interesting and characteristic references, and all show the intense enjoyment which he found in the journey, and the high spiritual profit which he derived from it.

After his return from Palestine, approaches were made to him by the publishers of the *British Quarterly Review*, which for many years had been edited by Dr. Vaughan, with a view to his accepting the editorship, in conjunction with his friend Dr. Reynolds. After some hesitation he took the position, and held it for twenty years, Dr. Reynolds being compelled, through pressure of other work, to leave him in sole charge after some eight or nine years' co-editorship. The position was one of large opportunities. The directorship of a review which was the recognised representative of the most intellectual life of the Free Churches, offered many possibilities for service, and the new editors strove to realise those possibilities. They gathered about them a staff of writers representing every school of thought and action, and some of the articles which appeared became of national importance.

Mr. Allon did not himself write many of the longer articles, but some which he did write were of great interest—as, for instance, one on Sinai after his Eastern tour; an outspoken article on the Prayer-Book, with

special reference to its bearing on re-union; and others on the Bampton lecture on Dissent, by Dr. Curteis, on Disestablishment, and on Matthew Arnold and Puritanism. To the shorter reviews and articles he contributed a much larger share, and the great majority of them were from the pens of the two editors.

This work, added to the claims of his own church, and innumerable claims from outside, made enormous demands upon his time and strength. Often after a hard day's work and an evening preaching service he would, when most men would have been exhausted, return to his study, and work through the midnight hours. His robust health enabled him to do the work of two ordinary men. The common complaints of students—nervousness and dyspepsia—were unknown to him. He knew nothing, as many intellectual workers are compelled to know, of whole days lost because of ill-health, but was able to prosecute his work steadily and continuously. No one who witnessed his vigour in the ordinary engagements of his church would have suspected the existence of the many claims which he had to meet in other directions.

The *British Quarterly Review* became in several instances a great force in intellectual and social discussions. In the first number of the year in which he became co-editor there appeared an important article upon attendance at places of worship, pointing out especially that the increased provision which had undoubtedly been made since 1851 had been exceedingly unequal, being much larger in the suburban belt than in the more needy and populous districts.



The article, while it was a symptom of the times, had undoubtedly also considerable effect upon the future action of the Churches. On January 21st, 1867, a conference was held at the London Coffee House. Mr. Miall presided, and on one side of the chairman were some sixty working men, and on the other a number of clergymen, ministers, and laymen, amongst them Dean Stanley, F. D. Maurice, "Johnny" Ludlow, Thomas Binney, Dr. Mullens, Mr. Allon, Mr. Henry Spicer, etc. There was no lack of plain speaking, and in many churches direct action was the result. Shortly afterwards Mr. Allon gave a special address on a Sunday evening to working men, and on the following Wednesday there was held in his lecture hall a conference upon the subject. The reasons given for non-attendance were, as usual, very varied, but the general testimony of the men who attended was that, if the previous Sunday evening's service, both in the sermon and in the attitude of the congregation towards visitors, were a specimen of the ordinary condition of things, attendance would be much more frequent. The address had given evidence that Mr. Allon possessed a power for clear presentation to popular minds of the intellectual reasons for religious faith, which many of his greatest admirers regretted he did not more fully cultivate and use.

It may be added that the conferences on this question showed—what we are sometimes liable to forget—that working men are not *as a class* deliberately absent from public worship, neither are those who are absent to be summed up under one particular head. In every grade absence is to be accounted for by all



kinds of reasons. This does not, of course, detract from the value of efforts which are made to discover the reasons for such absence. New ages demand new methods; but one fact will never change—that in the heart of a man there must be inspired the love of truth and of God before religion can be manifest in any act of worship. Any inquiry which neglects to make that its first test will be sure to come to wrong conclusions. There is a link needed between absolute unreligiousness and the enjoyment of public acts of worship. Experience seems to show that such a link is successfully provided by the freer services in public halls, theatres, and the like.

In the interminable and unsatisfactory discussions and negotiations which took place at this time upon the education question, Mr. Allon took a considerable part. In all the movements which the rational Non-conformist standpoint made needful he was active, though not always appearing, perhaps, in the forefront of every agitation. He felt, with many others, great disappointment with the results of Mr. Forster's Act. In his own words, "The Nonconformists struggle to win from sectarianism as much of its hold upon national funds as they can. Their aim is now, as it has ever been, entirely to prohibit every form of sectarian teaching at the public expense. In the *British Quarterly Review* he strongly demanded such modifications of Mr. Forster's Act as the position clearly made imperative. He was willing, as upon a later question, to separate himself even from Mr. Gladstone, for whom he had the profoundest reverence, rather than be weak upon so important a

matter. In the Manchester Conference of 1872, where the Nonconformists practically broke with the Government, he took an active and distinguished part.

No position has been more difficult to the earnest Christian man than that into which many have been forced by the controversies upon education. While seeming to be opposed to religious teaching, and so giving a weapon into the hands of narrow and bigoted foes, they have really been contending for what they earnestly believed to be the most sacred interests of religion. There is undoubtedly a distinct loss in all this, but the blame must lie at the doors of the narrowness which has made such an attitude necessary at all.

At this time, and not to be dissociated altogether from some aspects of the education controversy, there was the growing antagonism to the revival of High Church ritual and doctrine in the Church of England. The Bennett decision came in 1872, with its striking lessons for Nonconformists, and in the monthly letter which Mr. Allon was in the habit of writing to the Christian Union of New York he strongly resents the decision, and describes it as "perhaps the most important event, so far as the Established Church is concerned, for some generations."

"Whatever the diversity of the doctrine taught," he goes on to say, "the ritual of the worship must be uniform and non-sectarian. The sepulchre must be kept scrupulously white, but any kind of dead men's bones, Sacramentarian, Puritan, or Rationalistic, may be venerated with it. This is the notable com-

promise which these wise men of the world have arrived at, and which they hope may save their Church. From a present and violent disruption it may save it; but from the contempt of thoughtful and earnest men, and from the disintegration which inevitably befalls a Church which thus sacrifices truth to expediency, nothing can save it. The Church has often been saved by martyrdom, never by compromise." In order to appreciate Mr. Allon's position it is needful always to distinguish between his attitude to the Church of England as an establishment, and to many of its prominent men as Christian ministers. For want of this distinction he was sometimes regarded with suspicion by some of his brethren as not quite loyal to his distinctly Nonconformist views. No mistake could be greater. He was as staunch and loyal a Nonconformist as the most eloquent anti-Church orator. He said again and again, that, strong in the love of his people, and the possession of a place for teaching, he would not change places with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

But he was not so narrow or intolerant as to find it impossible to appreciate the goodness and sincerity of men with whom he could not on all points agree. His friendships with clergymen were many and sincere. By them he was looked upon as the representative Nonconformist. Perhaps few men of his generation did more to break down the stupid misunderstanding of Nonconformists which even yet sometimes darkens the Anglican mind.

An interesting and, perhaps, amusing instance of the position which, in the eyes of representative



Churchmen, Mr. Allon held was supplied about this time by the *Rock*. In an article entitled "Nonconformity Self-depicted," it lamented the disloyalty of Nonconformists to evangelical truth, though surely it had material enough for that kind of lament within the borders of its own Church. It says, "There is a generally unfavourable impression amongst Churchmen as to the character of the religious teaching of Dissenters." It "had not been forward to take notice of those rumours," but was now startled by a few sentences in a disestablishment lecture of Mr. Allon's in praise of some members of the High Church party in the Church of England.

This sentence specially exercised the *Rock*: "Perhaps no living clergyman is regarded by Nonconformists with a more genuine and general reverence than John Henry Newman." The *Rock*, in two columns, lectured Mr. Allon for his ignorance of the evangelical revival in the Church which had begun many decades before the Anglican revival—an assumption of ignorance which was altogether gratuitous. The incident is only worth referring to as an illustration of what was both a strength, and sometimes, perhaps, a weakness in Mr. Allon's character—his clear vision for the claims which could be put forward for many sides of a question. Earnest men who could see only one side of a question could not appreciate the calmness of his judgment, or his sympathy with men with whom he ought, they thought, by every tradition of his life, to be in perpetual conflict. The very fact which made him a wise leader and safe guide caused him to be misunderstood by those



who can appreciate no service to society save that of the active and aggressive reformer.

But there is the greatness of a broad mind and secure judgment which cannot judge all things from a narrow personal standpoint, but must look upon the larger field of a general service and a catholic apprehension of truth. This was the greatness of Henry Allon, and explains his strength and also the misapprehension which sometimes possessed the minds of his brethren with regard to him. Though strong in conviction, and not in some matters without prejudice, his attitude was essentially catholic.

To the pastor of Union Chapel, who in 1871 had received the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from Yale College, the year 1874 was one of considerable importance. At the end of 1873 he had completed thirty years of service, and had preached a sermon upon the experiences of those thirty years, "Within and Without." The review was one of great interest. He spoke of the continued peace and growing prosperity of the church with devout thankfulness, and he bore testimony to the fact that no men "could have more freedom in their thinking or be more sure of generous and loving appreciation of their service than the ministers of Free Churches. For himself, from the days of his youth until now, he had thought as freely and expressed himself as frankly as he was capable of doing." He acknowledged then, as frequently at other times, the loyalty and hearty co-operation of the deacons and the forbearance and kindness of the congregation generally. Of the life without the church, too, he spoke freely; of the past

thirty years he distinctly and unhesitatingly affirmed that they had been years of great intellectual and spiritual progress. "Never in the history of the world had the pure spiritual truths of Christ's Gospel freer play and power than they have had in England since I entered public life. Many evil habits and institutions still remain, but there is not one of them that has not desperately to struggle against powerful social sentiments of righteousness and religion. Infidelity is not only, I think, far more limited than it was, but it is far more reverential, and is often simply perverted religious feeling. Our social life is purer, nobler, and more religious than at any previous period of our history. The progress of the Church itself is equal cause for congratulation ; its movement, generally speaking, has been towards a deeper life, purer light, and greater liberty. By its aggressive zeal it has done much to repair the negligences of former generations. One of the most notable changes in Church life during my own ministry has been the modified relations of religious life to theological doctrine. The great dogmas have been simplified and disentangled from the modes and accretions of metaphysical theology. Perhaps our chief attainment in theology has been that men have come to see that no human creeds can exactly express Divine truths ; least of all, the creeds of 300 or 1,300 or 1,500 years ago, when all the conditions of theological knowledge were comparatively so inferior and immature ; and they are tearing away the creeds that they may get at the truth. God speed them in every such endeavour."

He noticed, too, the broader and more sympathetic

spirit of the Church towards human life. "We have come to understand that all pure pleasures are part of the true ministry of life." He also thankfully recognised the greater prominence in teaching of the love of the Divine Fatherhood, the simple and full preaching of Christ as the Light and Life of men, the great breadth and humanity of preaching, the richer musical service in worship, and the greater social activity of the church. On the whole he pronounced it a time of great progress and growth.

Much local interest was created by the review and the completed period which it marked, and the opportunity was taken to present Dr. Allon with a cheque for £1,200 as a mark of affection and gratitude. A much more important mark of progress and proof of confidence, however, was the resolve of the church to erect a new building. The old one had proved insufficient for the purposes of the greatly increased congregation, and the resolution was formed to build an edifice which should be worthy of the enlarged sphere of work.

An unusual course was followed, which it may be of interest to record. In addition to the ordinary instructions to architects intending to submit plans, there were issued notes on some essentials for the new church from the minister's point of view. When it is remembered how in some modern church buildings the preacher seems to be the last thought present in the architect's mind, it may be useful to compare Union Chapel with such buildings, and to trace in its arrangements the effect of these notes. They are printed here as a fair illustration of



Dr. Allon's high ideals of the mere machinery of worship:—

“The two great essentials of a Congregational church building are:—adaptation (1) for *Preaching*, and (2) for worship *of the Congregation*.

“I. PREACHING.

“In Congregational services the sermon is longer and more prominent than in Episcopal services.

“It is essential, therefore, that every person should see and hear the preacher, without conscious effort. Hence (1) there must be no obstruction to seeing—of internal supports, intercepting lights, lights on wrong levels, etc.; and (2) the acoustic properties of the building are of fundamental importance; the form of the structure, and especially of the roof, should be specially considered and adapted for hearing. The sermon must be heard *without strain*, either of the ears of the auditory or of the voice of the preacher. It seriously interferes with impression for the hearer to be consciously making an effort to catch the preacher's words; and with effectiveness, for the preacher to be solicitously straining to make himself heard. No preacher can *always* speak on the strain through a sermon of forty or forty-five minutes. It therefore follows (3) that the preacher must be in vital contact with his hearers. Eloquence, as has been justly said, is in the audience; the preacher's inspiration is not his theme only, but also the manifest sympathy with it—the kindling eyes and interested countenances of the people. If, therefore, he is separated from them by any such space as disables him from easily catching these, his inspiration must be entirely subjective, and necessarily partial.

“Hence the height of the pulpit and its distance from the nearest pews on the ground floor, as also in the gallery, should be reduced as much as possible. The galleries should



also be constructed at such an angle as will enable persons in the back pews easily to see the preacher. In many churches the preacher sees and is seen by only the front row.

“N.B.—Sufficient space round the pulpit and table-pews must, however, be provided for weddings.

“II. WORSHIP.

“(1) *Prayer* in Congregational churches is not liturgical, but *extemporaneous*. Hence, whatever necessity there may be for easily hearing preaching, it exists with still greater emphasis for easily hearing prayer. The preacher may be loud in addressing an audience; he who prays cannot shout in addressing the Almighty. The devotional feeling of the congregation is seriously disturbed and hindered, when it is necessary to strain the ear to catch the words of extemporaneous prayer.

“Where liturgical prayer is used, familiarity with the prayers that the preacher reads renders it much less important that he should be articulately heard.

“Thus, except during singing, the congregation *through the entire service* are dependent upon hearing the words of the minister.

“(2) *Worship* is not choral, but *congregational*.

“No hymn, chant, or anthem is sung in which the congregation does not join. The idea, very largely realised in Union Chapel, is that the whole congregation shall sing from music-books in four-part harmony.

“The choir, technically so called, is therefore only part of the singing congregation; its function is simply to lead it. It should therefore be in it, and of it—under no circumstances separated from it. It should be felt in its lead and control of the congregational song, but not seen or even heard apart from it. Hence it should be so placed as to be part of the congregation. The great attainments in musical worship of the present congregation are, in my judgment, to

be chiefly attributed to this arrangement, and could not be realised with a separate choir in a choir gallery ; for which, consciously or unconsciously, the congregation listens. The choir must, of course, be contiguous to the organ, and in possible communication with the organist. If by any projection of the manuals of the organ he can be placed in front of them, all the better.

“These practical requirements of Congregational services are so essential that, however desirable architectural congruity and artistic beauty may be, they must, in my judgment, be paramount. Our church buildings are for use, not for the realisation of conventional ideas, which often unfit them for use.”

Though, perhaps, full consent would not at once be given to all the propositions of these notes, yet they undoubtedly supply a link which has too often been wanting in the erection of churches. The subordination of everything to mere preaching produced the plain, unadorned meeting-houses which still stand here and there as monuments of their day. The mere Gothic building, however beautiful and adapted to worship, was largely unsuited to purposes of preaching. Union Chapel is, perhaps, as successful an attempt to combine the two forms as it would be possible to find. After the usual competition the plans of Mr. Cubitt were decided upon, and on Saturday, 16th May, 1876, the foundation-stone of the new building was laid. The occasion was made one of great public congratulation to the esteemed pastor, and he was surrounded by the most distinguished of the Congregationalists, and by many leaders in other Churches. It will be useful, as indicating Dr. Allon's attitude towards worship and towards other Churches,

to give some extracts from his statement read at the ceremony:—

“This ceremony is neither superstitious nor unmeaning ; as we intend it, it has a certain religious significance, both towards God and towards men ; but assuredly we conceive of no priestly consecration of either place or thing whereby inherent sacredness is given to it so as to render any secular occupancy or use a sacrilege. The only sanctity with which we would invest this place is the sanctity of holy service and association. In every high and holy sense we consecrate these buildings to whatever may tend to God’s great glory—to a special service rather than to a special sanctity.”

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“We gladly avow our identity with all religious men in the fundamental purpose of this erection—viz., the worship and service of the one true God, as the gracious and loving Father of all men whom He has made. We give glad and solicitous prominence to this our essential oneness with all men, whether within the bounds of Christian communities or beyond them, who offer to God a sincere and holy worship and service, for ‘in every nation God hath them that fear Him and work righteousness.’

“This, moreover, is distinctly ‘a house of prayer.’ It is not a theological hall, although theology will have prominence in its teaching. It is not a mere preaching place, although here the Everlasting Gospel will be preached. It is a ‘house of prayer,’ and the place and power of Divine worship in it will, I trust, ever justify this as its prominent designation.”

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“We have further to avow a distinctive ecclesiasticism, modes of Church organisation, worship, and agency, which make us Congregationalists rather than Episcopalians and Presbyterians. We offer no apology for this ; we mean by

it no intolerance ; we simply claim and vindicate our liberty and our preference.

“Finally, we are thankful that the liberties which we now exercise are legally secured to us. Nonconformist churches are no longer illicit ; they are as much a recognised part of the British Constitution, and as sacred in the eye of the law, as is the Established Church. . . . For this we are thankful—first, to God ; next, to our martyr forefathers and their successors, who won for us these liberties by their suffering and blood ; next, to a series of enlightened statesmen, not always—not often—thinking with us in ecclesiastical matters, but strong, faithful, and fearless in their battle for civil and religious liberty, of whom Mr. Gladstone, one of the most uncompromising of Episcopalians, is among the most illustrious ; and last, not least, to the personal religiousness, catholicity, and constitutional honour of our beloved Queen.”



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE MINISTRY CROWNED AND ENDED.

THE progress of Dr. Allon's ministry from that time was one of almost uneventful prosperity. The church, which proved to be considerably more costly than was at first intended, exactly fulfilled, in all other respects, the conditions which had been laid down, and while perfect acoustically was also of great beauty. The crowds which from the first filled it showed how fully the need of the day had been met, and how possible it was to combine a perfect auditorium without sacrificing beauty of design. In the Jubilee number of a leading architectural journal, Union Chapel was given as one of the hundred remarkable buildings of the century.

The truest monument to Dr. Allon's memory is Union Chapel. It speaks in many ways of his peculiar tastes and of the gifts which made his strength for service. The subordination of the choir and organ to the congregational worship is significant. Strangers on entering the building are often puzzled to find out where either choir or organ is; and though that subordination is, in the opinion of some, rather extreme, it remains a testimony to his strong belief in the need for absolute congregational worship, as distinct from any mere deputy work performed by the choir. The introduction of any mere performance

into the midst of an act of worship was utterly repugnant to his feelings.

Then the combination of Gothic beauty with the idea of a preaching place speaks of his æsthetic tastes adapted to the requirements of public address. Its ample provision of school-room, class-rooms, and the like, is significant of his belief in service as a necessity of the Christian life ; and the very existence of the structure is an abiding evidence both of his own untiring zeal and of the love and respect which he had inspired.

In 1877 Union Chapel was the scene of the last stages in the history of what was known as the Leicester Conference, and which at the time created a considerable amount of excitement. Dr. Allon held strong views upon the point at issue ; but at the time of the last meetings he was kept silent by domestic affliction. The Eastern Question, which about this time was agitating England, was to him one of very great interest. He preached during the year 1878 a striking sermon upon the war spirit in relation to the Russo-Turkish question, and then, as in his pulpit treatment of all controversial questions, confined himself to laying down great principles of righteousness. A story is told of his conversation at this time with a well-known minister, since deceased, who had got into trouble with his own congregation for attacking Lord Beaconsfield from the pulpit by name. He came to London to see Dr. Allon, and declared that he had only done what other Congregational ministers had done. Dr. Allon replied by saying that they had contented themselves with

stating as clearly as they could the great principles which were involved in the question. The minister replied, "Ah! I go rather in the way of the old prophets, like Nathan, who said to David 'Thou art the man.'" "Yes," said Dr. Allon, "but Nathan did not go into the synagogues, and there, from that safe distance, accuse David, but went to David himself; if you will go to Lord Beaconsfield and say to him what you said in the pulpit, then we will respect your courage."

In 1881 the Jubilee of the Congregational Union was celebrated; and it was universally felt by the members of the Union that there was no one to whom the chair could so suitably be offered for that year as Dr. Allon. The fact that no man before or since has twice received this honour is an added proof of the respect with which he had inspired his fellow-ministers. His two addresses from the chair were appropriate, dignified, and inspiring. The one in the Spring Session was on "Congregationalism;" that in the Autumn Session, at Manchester, was on "The Church of the Future," and is included in this volume. The manner in which he fulfilled the duties of Chairman in this Jubilee Year made a profound impression upon the churches. His tact and courtesy, together with his intellectual strength, made him a more than efficient representative of a great community at a time of great publicity.

In this same year a further proof was given of the vitality of the church over which Dr. Allon presided, and of the fruits of his teaching, in the opening of a third mission station, or branch church, in Station Road, Islington. Nothing was more emphatic in his

teaching than the claims of Christian service upon every member of his church; he repeatedly, both in public and private, ascribed its continued unity and high spiritual life to the fact that it had been always a working church.

At the time of his death it had—and has still—about three hundred teachers, in charge of more than three thousand children, and it included in its activities every imaginable form of service—gymnasia, mothers' meetings, young men's associations, Saturday-night concerts, savings banks, and almost numberless organisations directly or indirectly religious. All this was largely the outcome of his direct teaching; and he used to say that there were many vacant places in the congregation at the Sunday evening service which he was delighted to see, as they were the places of those who were hard at work in one or other of the missions of the church.

So busy a man could not possibly give personal attention to many parts of the church's work; but he was surrounded by experienced, thoughtful, and earnest workers, in whose hands he could leave, with perfect confidence, the management of many organisations. It was refreshing to hear the gratitude and real humility with which he spoke of the self-denying labours of those who thus carried on the church's work. It is one of the joys and, at the same time, one of the troubles of a true-hearted minister, that his name should be prominently associated with so many good works which he himself cannot accomplish. The joy of such association was Dr. Allon's; but no one was more ready to acknowledge the splendid



service of those whose works were much less public than his own.

The remaining ten or twelve years of his life were largely uneventful; their story being that of the activities of a large pastorate, and the thousand and one claims which come perpetually to a prominent and distinguished minister. The very fact of his ceaseless industry makes the story of his life more difficult to tell; touching many movements at many points, entering into association with many men of different schools of opinion and spheres of action, he has left an impression of a man who was unintermittent in all good works. His age and experience, added to his reputation, caused him in these last years to be greatly sought after for advice and counsel, and no small share of his time had to be devoted to correspondence and to the reception of callers upon every possible kind of business. The number of letters requiring answers was about thirty a day; and it would be difficult to state the average amount of time to which his callers thought they were fairly entitled.

In common with all busy men, he sought to devise means of gently hinting to his visitors when they had remained long enough. One of his most successful methods was the request, after some time, that they would post some letters as they passed a neighbouring pillar-box, some being generally kept in reserve; but even that did not always succeed, as the visitor would sometimes take the letters without taking his leave. The mention of these needful defences against inconsiderate visitors must not leave the impression that

he received callers unwillingly. No one was more ready to listen to any story of difficulty or need, or to help where real help was possible; but he was apt, naturally, to become impatient under the persistent urging of claims which it was impossible for him to satisfy.

Side by side with these activities of the last decade of his life are one or two events which need special mention.

In 1884 he completed a record of forty years' ministry in the church, and in a sermon specially bearing upon the fact, spoke again with deepest thankfulness of the peace and prosperity of the past, and of the fact that "the tide of their church life had been an advancing one, and that it rolled in greater fulness and strength that day than ever it had done before." There was naturally some sadness in his tone; many familiar faces had vanished; many of his contemporaries in the ministry had closed their earthly service, while he seemed still to be in the enjoyment of full and matured strength; but the whole tone of the address was one of gratitude and of hope.

During these years there was a good deal of discussion upon the question of the nursing staff of some of the hospitals helped from the Hospital Sunday Fund; and much feeling was excited against the sectarian limitations imposed in certain cases. The subject was thoroughly discussed by the Council of the Fund, and resolutions defining the extent of its control were unanimously agreed to. The following statement by Dr. Kennedy well illustrates the

position which Dr. Allon held in these public matters, as well as his own personal courage and the practical breadth of his views :—

“The part which Dr. Allon took in this matter will illustrate both the difficulty and its solution. He was the prime mover in calling the attention of the Council to the subject ; but he became so fully convinced that the Council could not interfere with the internal administration of the hospital in matters which did not affect their soundness financially and medically, that he not only agreed to these resolutions, but was himself their author, as he did not hesitate to avow at the public meeting.”

The presence and guidance of such a man at such a time were invaluable. Lacking such leadership, great and humane movements may sometimes be sacrificed to narrow views and imperfect judgments. When, a few years later, the London Nonconformist Council was formed, Dr. Allon was chosen as its first chairman, and it was generally acknowledged that no wiser choice could have been made than of one whose wisdom, discretion, and high standing would be a guarantee of the serious and exalted purposes for which the Council had been formed.

In 1887 there was held at Union Chapel a conference, under Dr. Allon's presidency, which at the time created some interest. The subject was “The Relation of the Church to the Material Condition of the Destitute Poor.” The conference proved of so great interest that it was adjourned once and again, and resulted in the formation of a committee of inquiry, and in the endeavour to secure upon the Islington Vestry men who would carry out the most



humane and practical schemes which were possible. This device of holding conferences was adopted in the church at other times, and upon other subjects, and their usefulness was greatly helped by the genial wisdom with which Dr. Allon presided.

In October, 1889, there was held in Union Chapel a great meeting, which was a cause of gratification to Dr. Allon, only equalled, perhaps, by the ceremony in 1877 at the opening of the present building. On the former occasion he had been surrounded by men of all sorts and conditions, eager to show their respect for the pastor of the church, such as Mr. Gladstone, the Hon. and Rev. W. Freemantle, Prebendary Calthrop—always a valued neighbour and friend—Mr. Tom Hughes, M. de Pressensé, Drs. Raleigh, Mullens, Parker, Stoughton; close and intimate friends like Dr. R. W. Dale, Joshua Harrison, J. G. Rogers, Newman Hall, and Dr. Reynolds; Dean Stanley being absent only because of illness. The later meeting marked the last stage in the history of the same building. The tower was just completed, and it was determined to hold a great meeting for thanksgiving, and to wipe off the last few hundreds of the fifty thousand pounds which the chapel had cost.

Lord Mayor Whitehead, a former worshipper at Union Chapel, presided, and the speakers, including Drs. Stoughton, Reynolds, and Dale, Mr. Guinness Rogers, Prebendary Calthrop, and Mr. H. Spicer, all testified to the profound attachment which, within and without the church, was felt towards Dr. Allon. The amount needed—some £1,200—was raised in the meeting, and the reference in the church report of



that year gives fitting expression to the crowning joy of a long and arduous ministry : "To our pastor this outcome of his labours is peculiarly gratifying, and we desire to record again our affectionate appreciation of his faithful, loving, and successful service over so long a period."

During the last few years of Dr. Allon's ministry it was felt that he should have assistance in his ministerial work ; but, from various causes, no final choice could be arrived at. At last, however, the way was opened for a settlement by a strange series of events, which were felt by all concerned to be providential. In 1885, and again in 1886, Dr. Allon had asked the writer of this memoir, of whose church at Sunderland his married daughter was a member, to join him in the work at Union Chapel. The Sunderland church was at that time, however, practically committed to a scheme of building and development which made it impossible to leave it, and up to the autumn of 1891 I had not preached at Union Chapel for five years or more. At that time Dr. Allon and his deacons had met with an exceedingly able and promising student, who would probably prove to be acceptable to the congregation, and it was arranged that his name should be submitted.

Dr. Allon called at Sunderland on his way home from his holiday in Scotland, and during that visit he arranged that I should supply his pulpit on November 8th, when he was to preach at Worcester. The arrangement was suggested on the ground that the settlement of an assistant minister,

which would probably by that time be an accomplished fact, would remove the reasons which had so long prevented me from preaching. But when Dr. Allon returned from the autumnal meetings of the Congregational Union at Southport in October, he was, in spite of the enthusiastic demonstration of affection which had been given to him there, depressed about the future, and, to the amazement of the deacons and the congregation, sent in his resignation, thinking that to be the best course in the interest of the church. The members of the church were at once summoned, and by a most enthusiastic and unanimous vote determined to ask him to remain in the pastorate until the completion of his fifty years' ministry, at the end of 1893, and promised to relieve him of one service each Sunday, and to look out for a co-pastor and successor.

This new and unexpected development, prompted, perhaps, chiefly by the depression which ill-health had produced, of course made the contemplated arrangement for an assistant-minister impracticable, and led to the remarkable fact that I was the first outsider to preach in Dr. Allon's pulpit after the new arrangement had been made, but as the result of an agreement which had been come to long before such an arrangement had been thought of. After the Sunday's services, meetings of the church and congregation were called, and I was asked to join Dr. Allon as co-pastor and successor. The letters which Dr. Allon wrote conveying the result of the meeting were full of promises of warm welcome :—

“The tone of the meeting was most hearty ; I might say enthusiastic. You will, I trust, have no hesitation in accepting the invitation. I need only for myself say that I could welcome no one with more confidence, or with stronger and higher anticipations of help and fellowship. I trust God has guided us and you ; we have earnestly sought His guidance. If I know anything of my own heart, I have no desire but for that which is most for His glory, and for the good of the church. May His blessing be richly given to you and to us all.”

When the invitation was accepted, the difficulties which first hindered existing no longer, he wrote : “We shall all receive you most heartily, and I shall sing my *Nunc Dimittis* with hope and faith.” In conversation Dr. Allon had declared that he had himself known so much of the difficulties of a co-pastorate that he thought he should have grace to avoid its dangers ; and it is a pleasure to the present writer, who, for a few weeks only, enjoyed the honour of working by his side, to testify to the spirit in which he fulfilled his part as senior pastor. His attitude was rather that of father to son than of senior minister to junior ; and had his colleague known nothing of him previously, the experience of those few weeks would have been sufficient to show him the tenderness, the strength, and the unaffected goodness which marked Dr. Allon’s character. In the light of after-events, the circumstances which led to this settlement were felt by all concerned to be so remarkable that their recital here will not, it is hoped, be regarded as an undue obtrusion of the writer’s personality.

On Wednesday evening, March 23rd, Dr. Allon



presided at the meeting which was held for the recognition and welcome of his junior colleague ; and there were one or two references and incidents in that meeting which have become inspiring memories to those who were present. He spoke with great satisfaction and hopefulness of the association with himself of one towards whom he had long felt both affection and confidence ; but there was, of necessity, something of sadness to him in the meeting. It was the beginning of the end, though none suspected how near that end was. It was given to few ministers, he said, to stand as he stood that night, looking back upon a single pastorate of nearly half a century, and to be able to say that the history of that period had been one of continuous and increasing sympathy between pastor and people. He felt that he had almost completed his pilgrimage, had entered into the land of Beulah, and was waiting there.

After acknowledging all the kindness and help which he had continually received from the deacons and the church generally, he went on to speak of the great changes which in these days are taking place in conceptions of Church life and work ; and with a sudden flash of the spirit of the young man which had never died within him, he declared, with strong emphasis, that he did not fear these changes, but thanked God for them. He believed that both in life and doctrine God was leading His people into wider and greater fields, and quoted, with an enthusiasm which some who heard it will not soon forget, the saying of the old Puritan, that "God has ever new light to break forth from His Word." When the



co-pastor, at the end of his statement, had expressed the joy and honour which he felt in being able to accept the call to work with Dr. Allon, and, if it were God's will, afterwards to receive from his hands the inheritance of the sole charge which he had so nobly fulfilled for nearly fifty years, Dr. Allon rose, and with the tears in his eyes, grasped the hand of his new colleague: that shake of the hand was felt to be sacramental, and of greater value than many speeches. The service was of great interest in itself; but was quickly to gain a new significance, which at the time was quite unsuspected.

It seemed as if, after the assistance which had come to him, Dr. Allon had taken a new lease of life; he preached with all his old vigour, and on Sunday morning, April 10, his sermon upon "Comfort in the Wilderness" was, by general testimony, characterised by all his old freshness and power. On the Tuesday, accompanied by Dr. Glover, his friend and medical adviser, he went to consult Sir James Paget upon some symptoms which had troubled him, and, cheered by the favourable report which he received, was full of life and gaiety at a meeting of ministers the same day. On the Wednesday he was unwell, but suspected nothing more than an attack of indigestion; on the Thursday the symptoms had not improved, and he was in some pain, but at his own door, in the evening, parted from his colleague with one of his customary pleasant jests, little dreaming that they would never meet again. On the Friday night he retired to rest, still unwell, but neither he himself nor any of his friends suspected any cause for anxiety.

In the early hours of the morning Mrs. Allon was, however, aroused by her husband's heavy breathing; she found him unconscious, and at once called for help; he never, however, regained consciousness, and before the doctor could reach the house quietly passed away.

His death was a sudden and terrible blow to his family and to his church—a blow which at first it was almost impossible to realise; but when it became possible to look at the facts more quietly, it was felt that no sublimer death could have been desired for him. He, whose life had been so active and useful, dreaded the day of enforced idleness. His anxieties about his church had to an extent been removed; he had been able to guide the church to an arrangement which he believed would perpetuate its usefulness, and then quietly, while still in the midst of his many activities, he passed to the sphere of a nobler service. To the survivors there was something unspeakably sad in so sudden a departure; but not one would afterwards have wished it otherwise. It was a wonderful instance of a completed life.

The congregations which assembled on the following day (Easter Sunday—when a large proportion of the regular attendants were out of town) were a witness to the profound feeling which had been created by the announcement of his death in the evening papers of Saturday, and were the beginning of a demonstration of public sympathy and respect which surprised even some of his greatest friends and admirers. At the morning service the junior minister made formal

announcement of the great loss which the church had sustained, and in the course of his brief address said :—

“Our thought to-day, then, must be chiefly of the more intimate bonds which have bound this church and congregation to him. Much will be said, in fitting places, of many aspects of his life and service, of his gifts of leadership, of his intellectual wealth and wide learning, of his catholicity and many-sided sympathies, of his greatness as a preacher, of his services to Church music : we think of him as the pastor, the friend, the man whom we loved. In many households there will be a blank, as though one of its own members had been taken : he has been closely associated with all their most sacred hours. He has baptised the children ; his voice has spoken the marriage prayer and blessing ; he has stood beside the open grave of many loved ones whom he has now joined ; many knew and loved him in their childhood who now have their own children about them. In forty-eight years of such a ministry many ties must be formed which are very hard to break—if we dare to call this breaking : there will be numberless regrets which will never find a public voice, but which will be deep and heartfelt.

“In this church, too, our loss is greater than we can by any possibility yet realise. So far as any church is the work of man, he has gathered it, sustained it by faithful ministry and wise counsel, and inspired others with his own judgment and energy. He always spoke gratefully of the loyalty and brotherliness of the officials of this church and the members generally, and the testimony which he bore in these walls only a few weeks ago will now be a consoling remembrance to those who have been associated with him in the administration of the affairs of this church. I hope that Union Chapel and the name of Henry Allon will be inseparable so long as this building stands.”



The funeral service was fixed for Thursday, April 21st, and during the morning an opportunity was given to any who wished it to look upon the coffin which contained the body of a beloved pastor and friend. In the midst of a great bank of beautiful flowers, sent by many friends and societies within and without his own church, the coffin rested at the foot of the pulpit from which he had preached but a few days before, and during the morning a continuous stream of people passed before it. Long before the announced time of service, great numbers of people were waiting for admission. The personal friends, and those specially invited or deputed by public bodies, were admitted by side doors; and when the main doors were opened the chapel was immediately filled by a congregation of more than three thousand people. In addition to the crowd in the church, it was estimated that in the open spaces in the immediate neighbourhood no fewer than ten thousand persons were waiting to show respect to the memory of one who had played so great a part in the life of North London. The service was commenced by the now sole pastor of the church, who, after prayer, expressed in very few words the sorrow and thanksgivings of the congregation. Lessons were read by Dr. Stephenson, President of the Wesleyan Conference, and prayer offered by Rev. Dr. Dykes, Principal of the Presbyterian College. Addresses were then given by two of Dr. Allon's oldest and most intimate friends, Dr. Reynolds and Mr. Guinness Rogers; both were profoundly touching in the strong affection and deep respect which they manifested.



A few sentences from the address of Dr. Reynolds must be given :—

“ Brothers and sisters in a crushing sorrow, fellow-sufferers from an irreparable loss,—Awed and heart-struck we have gathered round this silent but loved form, but we have already found that we are under the shadow of the Cross of Christ, where Death has lost his sting. We find ourselves touching the very steps of the throne of our Elder Brother, ‘ who liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore.’ The Lord and Giver of Life now speaks to each one of us the Divine Word : ‘ He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die.’

“ We have not assembled to tell the story of our brother’s life, nor to draw even the outline of his surprising and beautiful pastorate. We will not venture to estimate his noble character or manifold personality. We are not attempting here and now to enumerate his titles to our reverence, or to recite the great things he did for the Master whom he loved so well. At this moment I have neither power nor words to do other than give expression to our love and our humble hope.

“ Have we not reason ? Did any of us wish for a truer friend or for a wiser counsellor ? In deep sorrow was not the clasp of his hand and his strong sympathy as much as human grace could do for us ? Have we not reason for our love ? To many of you, and to hundreds and thousands who have pressed on before him, he opened the door into the invisible, he gave the right hand of fellowship into these mysteries of the kingdom of God. He taught you to understand the meaning of the cross and passion of the Son of God, and to see the glory of the Eternal Father in the face of Jesus Christ. He assigned you work in the church. He saved some of you from utter doubt. He stood shoulder-to-shoulder with you when you were weak in faith. He comforted you in bereavements and losses,

and often and again led you away from and out of yourselves by larger views of God and His Christ, of His work and His Spirit.

“Many of the highest visions of God are incommunicable; but others can be conveyed, and our beloved friend had the grace to make us understand what he had seen, felt, and handled of the word of life. We love him for his vision of the Almighty, and for the sympathy with our dimmer powers which enabled us to believe profoundly in *his* experience of the spiritual and Divine, and so to pass on with him into the Holy Place. All kinds of personal links united us to him. He lies there in his last bed with more secrets confided to his loyal breast than to any father confessor. His fidelity to his friends, his love of justice, his chivalry, his numberless acts of love to his brethren, to his people, and to those who had no shadow of claim upon his boundless generosity, compelled and inspired our affection.

“Only a month ago, at a beautiful and now never-to-be-forgotten service, the venerable Paul handed his sword and his blessing to Timothy. Notwithstanding the pathos of the words and tones, we all hoped that years of unbroken fellowship awaited them both; but without fear he has passed homewards, and now *all* the memory of his splendid career from first to last has become our dear younger brother's heritage. In its full-orbed beauty and completeness it will be an inspiration for us all.

“There is a great hope in this, too. His departure from us is not like the falling crash of a great tree to whose support we had clung fondly while the birds of the air sang in the branches, but it is rather like the reaping of a noble shock of corn fully ripe. The reaper of this golden grain is not DEATH, but our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who had need of these ripe ears. We must be willing in the day of our Lord's great power. We dare not

grudge this noble worker and soldier of the faith to the armies of heaven. He has long been preparing for the perfect service, for the joy of the Lord. Now he has entered upon it, with all the deep humility of his nature, with all the brightness of a hope no longer deferred, amid the reverence and love of all the Churches of Christ."

Mr. Rogers, from the standpoint of an unbroken friendship of forty-three years, bore testimony to the intense loveliness, the true grandeur of character, and the deep sympathy of Dr. Allon. He was, he declared, a broad, large-hearted, liberal Christian. He loved his own principles, but he was also capable of understanding the strength that there was in other systems, and of honouring those who adhered to them. All his strength, governed and guided by a warm and generous heart, made him a mighty power, not in our own Church only, but in the Churches everywhere. As a pastor he was wise, tender, and thoughtful, doing everything with such tact and wisdom that unity was preserved during this long series of years, and showing what a wise pastor, guide, and leader of a united church could accomplish.

At the close of the service, which was marked by the hearty singing of several hymns of triumph and thanksgiving, the benediction was pronounced by the venerable Prebendary Gordon Calthrop. A procession was then formed to Abney Park Cemetery, where the body was to be laid at rest. The hearse was followed by a great number of carriages, and accompanied by many people on foot, while for the whole length of the route taken—between two and three miles—crowds lined the streets. Within the



cemetery an immense crowd had gathered, but so well was everything managed that there were no signs of undue confusion or irreverent behaviour. The service at the grave was, as it was believed Dr. Allon would have wished it to be, exceedingly brief and simple, and in the conduct of it the writer was joined by Dr. Booth, secretary of the Baptist Union, and the Rev. Brooke Lambert, Vicar of Greenwich. The great number of public bodies formally represented at the funeral, and the vast crowds—large numbers of whom were in mourning—which gathered wherever any glimpse of the funeral procession could be seen, were an unmistakable testimony to the great usefulness and goodness of the life which had closed.

The place of interment was in the near neighbourhood of the graves of many distinguished Nonconformists. Drs. Binney, Raleigh, Leifchild, Fletcher, Hannay, Sir Charles Reed, Mr. Henry Richard—all rest in that part of the cemetery, but none of their graves will be visited by a larger number of men and women who come with grateful memories than will the cross of white granite which now marks the last resting-place of Henry Allon.

Memorial services were held in Union Chapel on the following Sunday, and in the morning Dr. R. W. Dale—who had so long been bound to Dr. Allon by a friendship of peculiar strength and intimacy—preached the funeral sermon. It was a magnificent testimony to Dr. Allon's greatness; it reviewed the conditions under which his life-work had been accomplished, and showed how much the various forms



of activity demanded of the prominent minister of a large London church. He had always fulfilled the spirit of the text which was chosen—"They watch on behalf of your souls as they that must give account." The whole of the sermon should be quoted here, but considerations of space must limit the choice to the more personal references which concluded it:—

"To attempt this morning, while our great sorrow is still fresh, any complete analysis of the varied powers which enabled Dr. Allon to discharge with such efficiency such great duties, and through so many years, or to give any adequate account of the various elements which contributed to his energetic personality, is impossible. All that I can do is to tell you briefly what kind of a man he seemed to be to one who knew and loved him well.

"He had sound health and physical vigour; for many years he never knew what illness was; and he had that delight in labour and those buoyant spirits which are among the most felicitous endowments of a man who is charged with heavy responsibilities and whose life is spent in constant toil. At one time he appeared to me incapable of weariness. The fibre of his intellect was firm and strong. He was always eager, alert, and keen. He was like an ancient Greek, and cared to know things, and to know all sorts of things, for the sake of knowing them. His interest was active in all kinds of literature, and there was no narrowness in his intellectual sympathies; excellence of every kind filled him with admiration and delight.

"His mind was literary in its strongest and most characteristic tendencies rather than speculative; he was never mastered, I think, by the imperial fascination of that great movement of philosophic thought which extends from Kant to Hegel. But while he craved for no vast and comprehensive theory which attempted to resolve into unity

the antithesis of the Infinite and the finite, he was always demanding of himself a reasonable account of his own beliefs. Within the range of his speculation he was impatient of confusion, incoherence, disorder; his intellectual method was rationalistic rather than mystical. And yet, while he had his own definite beliefs and his own intellectual method, he had affinities with widely contrasted schools of religious thought. He was strongly attracted by James Martineau; he was also strongly attracted by John Henry Newman.

"He was a man of strong affections and of deep emotion. There was passion in him, but, especially in his more elaborate sermons, it was largely suppressed. It was different in the discourses which were of a more pastoral character; in these his emotion was allowed to show itself freely; in these he moved your heart as well as instructed your intellect. But in discussing great subjects on great occasions his powerful understanding seemed to resent the disturbing power of passion. It was there; you felt its warmth; and yet it was only rarely allowed to set his thoughts on fire; it showed itself in the increased strenuousness of his purely intellectual activity. It was transmuted into intellectual energy.

"But when the intellectual strain was not upon him, there was not only warmth but flame. He was ardent in his love for his friends. His sympathy was as tender as a woman's. His emotion was sometimes uncontrollable, and I have seen it break out into tears. He was large and generous in his thoughts of men. His admiration for those whom he honoured was boundless. His delight in the successes of other men was one of the largest elements of his own happiness.

"The regal element of his religious life was the tenderness and strength of his personal devotion to our Lord. I recall times when we were sitting together in his study,

and when our talk, moving quietly and without excitement from subject to subject, drew near to Christ; and then I can remember the change that passed upon him: how he kindled; how sometimes his joy became radiant; how at others his voice broke with emotion while he spoke of the greatness of Christ's love; how at other times there burst forth exclamations of victorious faith in the Son of God who had become Son of man and was Saviour of the world. This was the ultimate secret of his power. Through all the confusions and uncertainties of his time his faith in Christ never faltered; with growing years his devotion to Christ deepened, and in Christ's service he found constantly increasing delight. And so it was as a minister of Christ, loving Christ with a vehement love, that he watched on behalf of your souls as one that would have to give account."

The demonstrations of respect upon the day of the funeral and on the following Sunday were only in keeping with the general expressions from many sources. The large space which was devoted by newspapers of every shade of opinion to articles and biographical sketches, and the universal agreement in recognition of his useful and honourable career—these, together with the great number of letters received from all sorts and conditions of men, testified to a widespread influence exerted by his life and work, the hearty acknowledgment of which was a profound consolation to those who had loved him most. It only remains now in a few words to point out some chief features in his life and work, and to indicate his strongest personal characteristics.

## CHAPTER V.

## LABOURS AND CHARACTERISTICS.

DR. ALLON'S literary activity through many years was altogether out of proportion to any lasting work which he has left behind. In literature, as in other things, he was a man of ceaseless industry, but his activities were so numerous and varied that the definite monuments of his energy are fewer than would have been expected. He gave, for instance, an enormous amount of time and labour to the editorship of the *British Quarterly Review*, contributing a large number of the shorter reviews and a fair number of the longer articles; but such work is naturally fugitive in its character, and leaves behind little testimony to generations which follow. It is to be regretted, from one point of view, that some of the strength which he gave to literary work which was of mere passing interest, was not given to enterprises which might have been more permanent in their character. There were certain periods of Church history which had a great attraction for him, and had he brought to the production of some work upon one of these periods the literary gift and great industry which he gave to many smaller matters, it was in him to have written a book which the world would not willingly have let die. But if he has left behind him no book which will take a prominent place in



the literature of this half-century, the published volumes of his sermons will long preserve their place as examples of the teaching of a wise and cultured Nonconformist minister, while his account of the lives of Dr. Binney and Mr. Sherman will be sought after so long as the memory of those distinguished ministers is preserved.

A strong characteristic of Dr. Allon's literary work was his intense impatience of all that was slipshod. He believed that words were capable of giving the clearest possible expression to the thought that was in the writer's mind, and he had patiently cultivated the power of setting forth in clear and felicitous phrase the meaning which he wished to convey. It was his deep sense of the importance of style in all literary work which caused him, in the early years of his ministry, to write every sermon twice; in that way he gained the mastery of expression which was afterwards so characteristic of all his work. If in his literary manner there was a danger, it was, perhaps, that of sacrificing force of expression to perfection of style; but the strength of his thinking generally saved him from that peril. There can, however, be no doubt that sometimes in the wonderful finish of his productions there was some loss of power—a loss which was felt to be all the greater because the power was in him, had he but let himself go.

His numerous literary engagements and his broad intellectual sympathies naturally brought him into contact with men of many creeds and classes. Literary men of all schools were heartily welcomed to his

hospitable home, and there were gathered round his table at times groups of men, comparatively few in numbers, but presenting a variety as great as could be found in any house in London. Dr. Reynolds, in some reminiscences of his friend which were published shortly after his death, speaks of two occasions which recurred to his memory, and which will illustrate his large and varied circle of acquaintance. One party was composed of leading Church dignitaries, Roman Catholic scholars, Quakers, Nonconformist advocates, and others, and to them Dr. Allon read the paper on "Worship" afterwards published in *Ecclesia*. The other party was made up of men like Deans Alford and Stanley, Matthew Arnold, George Macdonald, and Thomas Binney. Though there were, of course, other bonds more sacred even than that of literature between Dr. Allon and many of those who were thus his guests, his first introduction to most of them was through literature, and there were many who were drawn to him by bonds which were entirely literary.

He was a constant and omnivorous reader; history was perhaps his favourite study, though in one who seemed to read everything it is difficult to say exactly what did occupy the first place. A great scholar in the academic sense he was not, but of English literature he had a wide and intimate knowledge. Poetry he did not read, though in early years he had himself written much. In fiction he remained loyal to Scott and Dickens, and regretted the evidence that Scott was being less generally read. To see him in his library was to have the best proof of his constant love of reading; the spacious room was

crowded with books, and the shelves which covered all the wall-space were filled with books three deep, while piles of volumes were to be seen at every possible point—on tables, chairs, the floor—wherever room could be found for them. But so completely had his reading kept pace with the growth of his library, that with scarcely any hesitation he could put his hand upon any book he wanted, even though it might have been hidden for years behind two rows of more recent volumes.

Perhaps the distinctive place which will be given to Dr. Allon in the history of the Nonconformity of this half-century will be that of the strong up-builder and the wise leader of a large and active church, and the spiritual teacher of a thoughtful people. The numerous duties which involved increasing demands upon his time made it impossible for him to undertake what is known as systematic pastoral visiting, although of that he did more than some people gave him credit for; but in any time of need, when his counsel or sympathy could be of use, he was at once ready and active. Again and again have members of the congregation said to his successor that it was not until they were plunged into some trouble that they found how great-hearted was the pastor whom before they had but little understood. In matters of perplexity, matters of business, matters of public duty, his strength and his wise common-sense made his advice often sought for by members of his congregation, and to such approaches he always responded willingly.



One exceedingly beautiful aspect of his character was seen in his attitude to young people who went to see him with a view to the membership of the church. Many of them entered his room with something like fear and trembling, expecting some hard doctrinal examination—they found him all tenderness and sympathy, and came out with new understanding of the man who was their pastor. In the sick-room and in the house of sorrow the kindness of his heart was very quickly and delicately shown. There was little of the ordinary phraseology that makes speech at such hours often so empty; he did not always even offer prayer: there were times when he thought that that would be comparatively meaningless; but when he was leaving the house the hearty hand-shake and the warm “God bless you” were felt to be a veritable benediction.

In his pastoral work Dr. Allon was never happier than in the services connected with the domestic life of the congregation. His addresses at Baptismal Services and his conduct of the Marriage Service were not performances of a mere formal ritual, but were felt to be personal, hearty, and most real. Many who remember his conduct of such services will be glad to recall some of his words. He would address himself to the bride and bridegroom at a marriage service in some such words as these:—“You will not regard this relationship . . . as of trifling importance. Well and wisely has it been said, ‘they that enter into the state of marriage cast a die of the greatest contingency and yet of the greatest interest in the world;’ a lasting felicity or a lasting



sorrow are in the power of marriage. Next to your personal dedication to God you never have and you never can take any step so deeply involving your destinies in both worlds. If in all our ways God is to be acknowledged, pre-eminently should He be so in a step involving so much that is momentous as this. You will need to cherish much mutual respect, and to exercise much mutual forbearance; where the purest and highest affection exists this is necessary. Our poor imperfect nature suffers many moods and needs constant watch and control, especially in the thousand little things which make up daily life, and which chiefly determine its happiness. Let there be no cause for peevishness or irritability; we see some—and life presents nothing more beautiful or holy—who spend a long married life without a jarring feeling. Let this be the case with you; resolve from this day of your marriage that neither by thoughtless words nor resentful look shall the bright sun of your married joy be clouded. You will constitute a household—let it be dedicated to God. Wherever you have a tent, there let God have an altar. And through all your course see that ye be helpers of each other's piety. You will influence each other much; see to it that your influence be rightly directed. Seek eminent personal holiness. Be kindly watchful over each other's spiritual welfare. Let there be nothing in your married life, towards each other and towards God, that you will at last remember with grief."

His work as a religious teacher is best illustrated

by the sermons which are included in this volume. They have been chosen as instances of the different aspects of personal and public life with which he conscientiously dealt. There was never in him, as has been said, any attempt at the mere popular preacher. Indeed, he had a contempt for any mere effort to win applause ; and that fact, which to many of his hearers constituted the secret of his abiding strength and of his growing leadership, was, perhaps, the reason of his never being ranked amongst those who are called, with more or less discrimination, popular preachers. His own personal preference was for the argumentative and exhaustive style of preaching. He sometimes said that no man could preach a good sermon under fifty minutes. It was the natural verdict of one whose ideal of a sermon was a finished exposition of some particular text, or a fair and all-round examination of some special theme. But when now and again he departed from his ordinary method, and in one of his delightful studies of some Old Testament character, or in a passionate appeal to young men, came a little nearer to the level of common life, all his hearers, and not least those who were most attracted by his more usual method, felt that there was in him a great reserve of capacity.

Perhaps no contemporary of the later years of Dr. Allon's life held quite the same position in the estimation of Congregational ministers and churches as did he. To say that by those who knew him intimately he was greatly beloved, and that by all outside the circle of that intimate knowledge he was re-

spected, is only to put the fact in the barest statement possible. His services to the Congregational churches were numerous, and of almost every possible character; but no minister, perhaps, was more frequently called upon to preach at the opening of new chapels. His sympathy with, and labours for, the elevation of Nonconformist worship made him the most appropriate leader in the Dedication Service of any building for worship, and especially of those in which an effort was being made to attain the higher forms; and as time and opportunity served, he was always ready to respond to such invitations. Occasionally his visits for such purposes were made the occasion of conferences on the subject of psalmody with the members of the choir or of the congregation generally, and often there followed a marked improvement in the service of song in the house of God. These visits, too, were sometimes occasions of considerable private beneficence. He would find, in his journeyings about the country, ministers and others whom he had known in more prosperous days, and not seldom he came back a poorer man than he went. As a representative of his order he undoubtedly occupied the first place. If in later years anyone had to be chosen to represent the Congregational Churches, or even the Nonconformist Churches generally, Dr. Allon was one of the first to be thought of. During his visit to America in 1870, where he preached and lectured in many places, he was heartily welcomed by the churches as a representative English Congregationalist.

In connection with such organisations as the



Hospital Sunday Fund, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and other similar societies, his position was universally felt to be a representative one; and, not long before his death, the Archbishop of Canterbury, having to leave the chair early at some united gathering in Lambeth Palace, recognised that position by asking him to take the vacant place. His handsome face, his refined manner, corresponded to the ability and tact with which he fulfilled the responsibilities of such positions. There are some unseen services that he rendered to the ministers and churches of his own order which at the time were not always known in large circles, but which it would be wrong to pass over now. Perhaps no man ever gave more financial help and real brotherly sympathy to poor ministers. A sad story of want, and of battling with imperfect means, would move him to tears; and his was a sympathy which did not expend itself in mere emotion, but took very practical and helpful forms. Many a man greatly needing sympathy lost a good friend when Dr. Allon died.

Perhaps no minister, again, was more sought after by those of his brethren especially who in times of perplexity were in need of counsel. Young ministers of other denominations seeking larger opportunities than they thought they found where they were; ministers of his own order, troubled about matters of Church government or of doctrine, asked his advice, and were always heartily helped. The testimony of Dr. Reynolds at his funeral, that he had been regarded by many as a father-confessor, was profoundly true.



More than once, too, did he come publicly to the rescue of men who were suspected, and by showing countenance at critical times to those who were being somewhat persecuted, he helped, without doubt, to strengthen them in their faith and purpose. At the last autumnal meeting of the Congregational Union which he attended—that at Southport in 1891—the incident, already alluded to, occurred which happily emphasised the position he held in the estimation of his brethren. The chairman mentioned almost incidentally that it was Dr. Allon's birthday, and at once the whole assembly rose with a demonstration of respect and of affection which he found himself almost unable to bear. It was an illustration of his modesty that at first he could hardly believe the demonstration was intended for himself.

One word should, perhaps, be added in acknowledgment of the service which he rendered to Congregationalism in the various committees of which he was a member. His great business capacity and wide experience made his advice invaluable, and to many institutions and societies, his beloved Cheshunt College amongst the rest, he did invaluable service in this quiet way.

No part of Dr. Allon's work was more widely known than his endeavours to promote a nobler service of song in public worship. It is difficult for worshippers of this generation to realise how utterly poverty-stricken—so far as the service of praise is concerned—was the worship of the house of God half a century ago. The severe repression of everything

which could be suspected of any tendency towards ceremonialism resulted in a bare and meagre service, which—however it might satisfy the merely spiritual instincts of the worshipper—left no room for the sense of beauty in form or in sound. The long, long prayer and the slowly sung hymn were the only outlets for all the possibilities of worship-aspiration; and that which, to the spiritual few, might be a source of inspiration and of strength, was to the many a stumbling-block and a weariness. But the great advance in the public taste for things beautiful has been as manifest in the conduct of public worship as elsewhere, and it is only right that the names of those who braved the opposition to this advance should be held in continual honour by the Church.

There is no need—nor, if there were need, is this the place for it—to enter upon the discussion of the relative claims to this honour; but no impartial observer of the progress of Nonconformist worship could deny the great influence which, in the earlier days of the movement especially, was exercised by Dr. Allon. His hymn, anthem, and chant books were for a long time very largely used in the Congregational churches of England, and became models to other Churches; and while their use has become somewhat restricted by the issue of the officially authorised books of the Congregational Union, they have left a very deep and abiding mark upon Congregational worship generally. His volume of hymns for children's worship is in the front rank of such volumes, and is still very popular. In the earlier years of his

work he had the advantage of the co-operation of Dr. Gauntlett.

It would be impossible to represent Dr. Allon's views on the importance of Church song, or on the great improvement which has taken place, half so well or clearly as he himself has done. There are given here, therefore, extracts from his preface to the latest issue, in 1886, of his *Psalmist Hymnal*—the fruit of many years' labour—and from a lecture on the subject delivered in 1861, before the improvement in Church song had become so general as it is to-day.

“The amazing advance of Congregational singing in English-speaking churches can be fully realised only by those who can personally remember what, in Parish church and Nonconformist chapel alike, it was forty years ago. In the Anglican Church the neglected Hymn has become prominent in Congregational worship, in the Puritan Churches worship has developed in æsthetic forms. The art-music of ritual worship has deepened and broadened into Congregational song, while the rude fervour of Evangelical Hymn singing has developed into a higher art-expression. Both tendencies have thus combined to produce what is perhaps a more consentaneous and extended culture of the worship of the congregation than the Church of Christ has ever known. One effect has been fresh contributions to the Hymnology of the Church of a very rich and precious character. It is impossible to exaggerate the contributions to worship-song of the Evangelical Revival of the Eighteenth Century—of Watts and Wesley, Toplady and Doddridge, Cowper and John Newton; but the deeper and broader spiritual life of our own age has produced contributions of equal and more diversified excellence. James Montgomery and Josiah Conder, Keble and Lyte,



Newman and Faber, C. Elliott and Monsell, Bishop Wordsworth and Bishop Walsham How, George Rawson and Horatius Bonar, John Ellerton and Godfrey Thring, Ray Palmer and Bishop Bickersteth, Frances Havergal and Mrs. Alexander, with many others, have raised our Church Hymnody to a very high level indeed, and have supplied congregations with exhaustless stores of worshipping inspiration. It is given to no one man or generation to furnish adequate and permanent expression for the manifold devotional life of the Christian Church. To this all ages, all Churches, all individualities, must contribute. The transitions in religious thought, experience, tone, circumstance, and work, which are continually going on, necessitate fresh modes of devotional expression—

‘The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,  
Lest one *good* custom should corrupt the world.’

There are Hymns, the glorious possession of all the Christian ages, which in their fitness and fulness as expressions of common Christian life, no changing forms can affect ; and there are also individualities of religious inspiration and expression that are born of each generation and address themselves to it. It is in the latter that the mutations of Hymnody are seen and felt. Old leaves drop from the Hymnological tree, and fresh and more affluent foliage forms. The large proportion in this selection of Hymns by contemporary writers—nearly one half—will surprise many.

“Transcendent, therefore, as were the excellences of Watts and Wesley as hymn writers, many of their compositions have necessarily become obsolete. The forms have changed in which theological idea embodied itself, and in which religious life was realised. New fields and modes of Christian work have become imperative ; new embodiments of social, family, and Church life have been generated ;



conceptions of Christian habit and relationship have been modified : even the suggestive metaphor of one generation becomes obsolete or ludicrous in the generation following it. All these things, while they do not affect the radical elements of Christian life, necessarily change its modes of expression.

“A Hymn is the inspiration of piety and poetry—both; and the piety is more than the poetry. It is not too much to say that, were it an alternative, the devotional purposes of Hymnody would be better accomplished by the rudest forms of devotional fervour than by the most perfect embodiments of poetical genius. Few great poets have contributed to our Hymnody; while some of the Hymns that have taken an inflexible hold of the heart of the Church have been written by men concerning whom almost all we know is that they wrote them.

“It is to be remembered also that the Hymn Book of the Church is the manual not of the literary and the cultured only, but also of the uncultured and the ignorant. It must therefore address itself to their modes of apprehension, unless artistic and literary selfishness is to leave them uncared for. Not that either good taste or refined feeling need be violated in the compositions of such an appeal. We need not have recourse to what is vulgar in order to secure what is popular and inspiring: but this aim puts a limit upon over-fastidiousness. If the common people are to be the care of the Church, its Hymnal must be an embodiment for their use. The Hymns of the Church, like the Ballads of the nation, are for popular lyrical use, and are to be tested not by mere literary canons, but by their power of devotional inspiration. That is the best Hymn which has in it the most potent spiritual inspiration for the greatest number of worshipping men and women.

“The same principles apply to Tunes. Many Tunes that, tested solely by canons of Musical Art, would be pronounced

inferior, have in them—like many ballad tunes—a power of popular inspiration that would cause their excision to be a devotional loss. While, therefore, ever seeking, both in the Hymns and in the Tunes, to avoid what is incongruous, and to elevate both poetical and musical taste, it has been felt that the admission of a Hymn, or of a Tune, was not to be determined by art-canon alone, but rather by its practical power of popular inspiration.

“Such Hymns have been selected as seemed best calculated to bring men directly into spiritual communion with God in Christ, not so much through Theologies, or Sacraments, or Churches, as through the deep sense of spiritual realities—the affinities and necessities of their spiritual nature. This is helped by the spiritual as distinguished from the ecclesiastical and ritual traditions of past ages. The problem of a devotional manual is neither unduly to relax nor to overstrain the associations of the religious life, but to make all things, past and present, minister to its highest development.”

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“It is impossible to exaggerate the practical importance of a rich and cultured worship-music. It is true that we worship a spiritual God, who requires of us only a spiritual service; but it is true also that we who worship are sensuous as well as spiritual beings, and that we are largely dependent upon our sensuous nature for the excitement of spiritual feeling. If we read the Bible we are greatly influenced by the beauty of David’s poetry, the splendour of Isaiah’s eloquence, and the intellectual force of Paul’s reasoning. If we hear sermons, we are affected by the eloquence as well as by the orthodoxy of the preacher. If we pray, our devotions are winged by the fitness and tenderness of the words that we employ. So, if we sing, we are affected by tune as well as by words.

“I would not test Church song by its mere poetry and

music. These may be of the very highest artistic excellence, and yet for all purposes of worship be but ‘as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal;’ they may possess only the intellect and the sensibilities. A man may have the most exquisite enjoyment of both, and his heart of worship remain untouched. Neither would I test Church song by mere ecclesiastical usages or traditions, either episcopal or nonconforming, for these are often as unreasoning and injurious as the traditions of the Pharisees.

“But I would test Church song by its practical fitness for inciting and expressing true worshipping feeling—by its power, experimentally proved, of appealing to that which is highest and holiest in our spiritual life, of making us forget self and think about God, of making the love of evil depart out of us, and of producing godliness within us. That may be the best form of worship for one congregation which is not the best for another. Why not recognise in congregations differences of character, education, habit, and ability? Why should all congregations worship alike? Why not approve in each that which is the most conducive to its own worshipping joy?

“The only uniform canon that I would impose is—that whatever the form selected, it be the worship of the people, the united vocal praise of the whole congregation, a form of song in which every worshipper can easily and heartily join. We do not sing when we merely listen to a choir, any more than we preach when we merely listen to a sermon: the song or the sermon may affect us, but it is the act of another and not our own. God cannot be worshipped vicariously; and few perversions of worship are more incongruous than for a congregation to be listening while a choir is performing—than for a worshipper, with his heart full of praise, to be unable to give utterance to it, from inability to join in the singing, or else to be checked in his attempt to do so by the sexton’s well-known rebuke:



‘Stop, sir, stop! we do all the singing here ourselves!’ In Nonconforming churches, Church song is the only congregational act. The people are preached *to*, and prayed *for*, surely they are not to be sung *to* as well.

“Whether, therefore, it be choir or precentor, organ or unaccompanied voices; whether the rustic pomposities of the village church, or the artistic slovenliness of the town cathedral; whether the barbarous vocalisation of the ‘Denmarks,’ and ‘Polands,’ and ‘Calcuttas,’ of the last generation, or the skilful combinations of Handel and Mendelssohn in this; in these things let every church be ‘fully persuaded in its own mind.’ I would ‘lay upon it no greater burden than this necessary thing,’ that from a service of worship every form of song be resolutely excluded in which every worshipper cannot join. Worship is a sacrifice to God, not to musical art. . . .

“I hold that all debates about worship-music, whether it should be chanted psalm or metrical hymn, are simply absurd. By the vail of tradition or of prejudice they cover up the true point at issue, and make the very worship of God a badge of sectarianism. If it be conceded that both psalms and hymns are to be sung, the question is resolved. If it be a psalm that we sing, we sing it to a rhythmical tune; if a hymn, we sing it to a metrical tune. Both are chants, for ‘*chanting*’ is simply singing, whatever may be the structure of the music adopted.

“In our uninspired hymnody, God has given us a precious possession of devotional wealth, the inheritance of many generations. It has enriched our worship, expressed our religious emotions, been the bond of our Church praise, and the joy of our pious homes. It has strengthened us in great duties, solaced us in great sorrows, and cheered our dying beds. Next to the Bible, the greatest loss that the Church could sustain would be the loss of its hymnody. Germany could do better without Luther’s sermons than



without his songs. England could spare all that her Doctors have written better than her Evangelical hymns ; there can be no comparison between the religious power of dead books and of living songs.

“ But precious as our hymns are, we may not exalt their religious power above that of the inspired Psalms—sanctioned as these are by a millennium of worship in the Jewish temple ; by the worshipping use of our Lord and His Apostles ; by the almost exclusive use of the Christian Church for four hundred years, and by their perpetuated use to the present day ; for from the day in which they were written to the present day there never has been a time when they were not the worship-song of the almost universal Church. . . .

“ In conclusion, I have but one canon of Church song to insist upon. I would not prescribe either its form or its character, further than to require that it be reverent and devotional, ‘ fit for a seraph to sing, and an angel to hear.’ But I do demand that it be, not a choir song to which people must listen, but a congregational song in which people may join—a worship, not of priests, but of the whole church. For this end I regard that as the best worship-music which in the greatest degree combines simplicity and beauty, devoutness and fervour.”

A few last words must be said upon Dr. Allon’s personal characteristics. At all periods of his life his appearance was striking, and produced upon the mind of an observer the impression of a strong man, strong in intellect as well as in physique. Dr. Reynolds, describing his appearance in the earlier days of his ministry, has spoken of “ his raven locks, his remarkable eyes of deep blue, his blanched face, his refined expression.” To this generation, however, the memory

is rather of the silver-grey hair, the handsome mobile face, which was only seen at its best when lighted up in the midst of conversation or in the earnestness of some public address. His mouth was remarkable, and those who knew him well could tell at once from its slight movements what emotions possessed him: sorrow or laughter might be sternly suppressed, but some revelation was always in the play of the lips.

He had, during the greater part of his life, remarkably good health; the disease which asserted itself during his later years did not, until the last year or two, interfere seriously with his work, and then only for one or two comparatively brief periods. No man who had not great physical strength could possibly have accomplished all that he was able to do.

Without intruding unduly into spheres which have a sacredness not to be lightly touched, it should be said that nowhere did the character of Dr. Allon appear stronger or more beautiful than in the privacy of his home life. That life of freedom from outward restraint, in which the virtues and defects of character are most clearly seen, only showed him to be a man greater and better in himself than in all his outward activities.

Those who were privileged to see it will not easily forget his chivalrous behaviour to, and tender regard for, his wife. Her affection and unselfishness made his home a place of continual rest and renewal for his work. Mrs. Allon's early days had been spent in the midst of striking religious influence, and for some years, between the death of her father and her

marriage, she was largely influenced by the strong character of the late Mr. Potto Brown. The lessons which she had learned in these early years she brought to her new position, and they enabled her to be a true helper to one whose position was becoming every year of increasing importance. Mrs. Allon willingly and ably took her share in many of the organisations connected with the church, but the chief sphere of her influence was in less public forms of service; chiefly in the sympathy and affection with which she sustained her husband throughout his long ministry. Her sudden death, just as this volume was going through the press, called forth many tributes of regard and affection, and the grateful love of her children, which no words could exaggerate, bear testimony to the beautiful spirit of the home.

Dr. Allon was a wise and tender father, seeking rather to train the judgment of his children than to coerce their will; their memory of him is one of unceasing gratitude and affection. Remembering the great love which bound him to his home, nothing has been more pathetic in connection with his death than the fact that his youngest and greatly loved son, who only returned from sea just in time for his father's funeral, sailed again within a few days and has never since been heard of, nor has there been seen any trace whatever of the ship in which he sailed. In the midst of all the sorrow it was almost a matter of thankfulness that Dr. Allon had been spared a grief which would have been all but intolerable, and which undoubtedly hastened the death of Mrs. Allon. Those who saw



him most nearly and frequently had most knowledge of his tenderness of heart, and would often see tears in his eyes at the mention of troubles or kindnesses of others which had been spoken of largely as a matter of course. The coldness which some people thought they saw in him had no existence in a nearer knowledge.

Owing partly to his physical strength, and chiefly to his thoroughly healthy nature, Dr. Allon had a vigorous enjoyment of life. His social powers were great, and he was never happier than when hospitably presiding at his own table. One frequent guest has said that it was interesting to see the skill with which he would, by a chance question or remark, draw into the conversation some guest who seemed likely to be left in solitude. The large and varied circle of his acquaintance made hospitality a duty; but it was just as truly a delight. Many distinguished men gathered in his dining-room. Some few may be named, as Mr. Gladstone, who was always a staunch admirer of Dr. Allon, and who, when divided from him by a still burning question, declared the separation to have been a real grief to him; Dean Stanley, Dean Alford, Dr. (now Archbishop) Maclagan, George Macdonald, Matthew Arnold, John Bright, Mortimer Collins, distinguished ministers and laymen from America, where he had many friends; and always, for part of his English visits, his firm friend Henry Ward Beecher. The host was never, as is the fate of some, lost in his hospitalities, but always contributed largely to the enjoyment and profit of the conversation.



He had a strong sense of humour, sometimes too sternly suppressed. No man could perpetrate a worse pun or tell a better story. He loved a jest, but never a jest doubtful in character. His parting with his friends was often accompanied by some apt pleasantry. In his preaching there were occasional glimpses of a quiet humour which perhaps he might have indulged more frequently with effect. His hearty laugh at some good story or some innocent jest, was the expression of a healthy and wholesome nature. He had his favourite stories, which his friends heard more than once, and perhaps his chief favourites were those which exposed the emptiness of the mere cant of religion, for which he had an unspeakable contempt. One story he invariably told with much zest, of a man who always saw God's hand in his success, by whatever means he might have gained it. The hero of the story was speaking in a religious meeting, and publicly thanked God for his success in business, which, he said, began thus: "When a youth, he was standing by a toll-bar when a gentleman drove up, and taking out his purse to pay the toll, dropped, without knowing it, a shilling to the ground. The youth put his foot upon it, and when the gentleman had gone pocketed it. That," he added, "was the first shilling the Lord sent me, and He has blessed me ever since." His enjoyment of the joke was nearly connected with his strong conviction, which he sometimes preached very earnestly—of the need of righteousness in business transactions. In conversation with friends he was exceedingly frank and outspoken, and was, from this cause, once or

twice involved in misunderstandings and conflicts which might otherwise have been avoided.

In political and social matters he was a strong Individualist, and never quite understood the newer tendencies of to-day. His emphasis was upon individual enterprise and character rather than collective action, and he used constantly to remind others that the second of these must fail unless the first be maintained.

In another connection something has been said of his generosity. Like many good men, he was harder in theory than in practice. None could say stronger things of those who, by their own fault, had become failures in life, but none were more ready to help the very men whom in theory he denounced. If sometimes he turned from his door one who, he was certain, was a mere professional beggar, it was at the cost afterwards of many self-reproaches. His gifts were many and generous.

He had some strong and long-continued friendships, the memory of which is a sacred possession to those who survive. Of these, Dr. Reynolds, Dr. Dale, Mr. Joshua Harrison, Mr. Guinness Rogers, and Dr. Newman Hall may be specially mentioned. They were all friends of many years' standing, and no greater testimony can be given to his worth than the words they have spoken of their deep love and admiration for him.

His habits were exceedingly methodical and orderly. He kept most careful and exact account of all the sermons which he preached and places which he visited, and could always, at short notice, find a

paper or book which he required. Method in his work enabled him to get the maximum of results out of the minimum of time.

He was a man of great moral courage, though strangely enough the common sense and breadth of view with which it was tempered sometimes gave the impression of one who was supremely a lover of compromise. No man would speak out more boldly for what he felt to be true, or more warmly champion a truth which was attacked, or a man who he thought was ill-treated.

Finally, he was a loyal and warm-hearted servant of Jesus Christ. To Him in early days he "gave his heart," and afterwards his life; and he has left behind a record which must long be a gracious memory to his family, his church, and his friends. He "served his generation by the will of God."





SERMONS  
AND ADDRESSES.



# SERMONS AND ADDRESSES.

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[1867.]

## THE GLORY OF THE SANCTUARY.

“I will make the place of my feet glorious.”—ISAIAH lx. 13.

THESE glowing pictures of the final glory of the Church are the Apocalypse of the Old Testament, and they produced upon the Jew the effect that the Apocalypse of John produces upon us.

The expectation of a golden age has ever been the imagination and the hope of men. The Bible presents it in its religious form. It makes this the light of all our anticipations of the future, the inspiration by which all endeavour is animated, all endurance sustained.

Like other dreams of a golden age, this would be a mere imagination but for the evidence of Divine purpose and assurance upon which it rests. Instead of saying religion dreams of a golden age because it is the common illusion of men, would it not be truer to say all men dream of a golden age because of the traditional religious assurance of it? Here is the religious conception of the millennium, set in sublime spiritual lights, commending itself by its transcendent spiritual glory and by its practical effects upon human character and feeling, just as the sunshine is demonstrated by the light that it diffuses and by the life that it quickens.

The Babylonish Captivity was a great civil and religious darkness: the throne was overturned, the Temple and its worship destroyed, and the religious

condition of the people was sadly demoralised ; outwardly and inwardly it was a dark night of bitter sorrow and troubled dreams.

In the midst of this condition the prophet unrolls his apocalypse. He has represented Jehovah as triumphing over idols, and the Servant of Jehovah, the Messiah, as triumphing in His sufferings ; and then, with an urgent cry, almost a shout, he summons the Church to its spiritual development and triumph. " Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Its scattered children shall be gathered, the favour of Jehovah shall be upon it, He shall dwell in the midst of it, and the whole earth shall contribute to its glory.

As in John's description of the New Jerusalem, the metaphors employed are largely taken from the Temple service ; but all resources of physical nature, of national power, of intellectual genius, of spiritual grandeur—from the cedar of Lebanon and the gold of Ophir to the tribute of nations and the homage of their kings—are laid under contribution for the glorious picture. Lustrous beauty, affluent grace, spiritual honours, transcendent blessings, are lavishly promised, and are wrought into a description with which only the vision of the New Jerusalem can compare.

No wonder that the prophet gathers his singing robes about him. How could he expound such glories in prosaic modes of thought, or rejoice in them but in the words of a rich rhetorical imagination and in language of poetic vividness, sublimity, and power ?

It is a marvellous religious apocalypse that is unrolled before him ; transcendent spiritual conceptions break upon him, the spirit of the prophet is not subject to the prophet, and he is inspired to raptures that have no parallel save in John's visions



of the Christian apotheosis of men. The thought and language of both are congruous with their theme. Hence these last twenty-six chapters of Isaiah's prophecies are luminous with spiritual conceptions of religious truth and life and catholicity such as Judaism itself never conceived.

The central idea of this great glory of the Church is the presence in it of Jehovah Himself. "I will glorify the house of my glory." "I will make the place of my feet glorious." "As for me, I had it in mine heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God." "We will go into His tabernacle, we will worship at His footstool." In the place of His worship His footstool partakes the glory of His throne.

To common spots of earth the place of Divine worship is what the Holy Place of the Jewish Temple was to its outer court, what the Temple itself was to the rest of Palestine—the place of special manifestation, grace, and joy. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein" "Whosoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

The representation may suggest to us the conditions and characteristics of God's true worship.

Two things seem essential to the glory of a church :

*Firstly*—That it be a place of Divine manifestation.

*Secondly*—That the Divine manifestation produce its proper spiritual effects upon the worshippers.

I. A church will be glorious just in the degree in which it is a place of Divine manifestation.

The glory of any place is the presence that fills it: the glory of the throne is the character of the monarch, the glory of a country the patriotism of its inhabitants, the glory of a house the virtues of

its inhabitants. The glory of Solomon's Temple had its renown, not from its transcendent architecture or its consecrated wealth—in these it was far surpassed by pagan temples—but from the Divine manifestation that filled it. Its mercy-seat was the theocratic throne of Jehovah; its Shechinah-splendour was His symbol; its oracle declared His will; the ark of the covenant contained His law; the altars of sacrifice and of incense, with sprinkled blood on the mercy-seat, indicated the way of approach to Him. These filled the Temple with sanctity and awe, and gave it a renown throughout the world.

Who thought of the plates of gold that covered the mercy-seat, or of the gorgeous carvings that adorned it, when both were enveloped in the mystic flame of the Shechinah? Who thought of the purple hangings, the costly vessels, or the gorgeous vestments of the high priest, when all were dimly seen through the awful cloud which filled the place? The Lord of Hosts was there in palpable manifestation; the Majesty of heaven and earth dwelt in the thick darkness. What were the material splendours of the temple of Diana at Ephesus compared with these spiritual glories of the Temple at Jerusalem?

This Temple was about to pass away. Already the axes of Nebuchadnezzar's army were lifted to destroy it; already the torches were lighted that should ignite it; and yet Isaiah predicts a worship that in its glory should far transcend all that had consecrated it.

In material splendours, and in inspiring associations, the Temple of the restoration was far inferior to the Temple of Solomon. No ark of the covenant was there; the rich and precious memorials of God's great interposition had perished; no Shechinah-glory rested upon the mercy-seat. There was no palpable symbol of the Divine Presence to meet the eye and to awe the heart of the worshipper. The

service continued, but with an impoverished ritual and a faded splendour. Well might the old men weep, and mingle their wails with the songs of consecration. "Who is left among you that saw the house in its first glory? and how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison with it as nothing?"

And yet their lament was rebuked by the strange announcement that "the glory of the latter house would exceed the glory of the former." How? Purely because it would be filled with a more august Presence. The "Messenger of the covenant" would come to this Temple, the "Desire of all nations" would appear in it. The august splendours of the old Temple were but symbols of His spiritual glory, who was "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." "A greater than Solomon is here." "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

It was but an unconscious child in the arms of a peasant mother; it was but an intelligent boy asking questions of the doctors; it was but a Nazarene peasant disputing with the Pharisees. No signature of divinity was stamped upon His countenance, no nimbus was around His brow, no Levite ministered to Him, no Rabbi sought teaching from His lips. He "had no form nor comeliness;" the slow deterioration of years had been anticipated by the ruthless ravages of sorrow; and to the man of thirty it was objected, "Thou art not yet *fifty* years old." And yet His presence was the greatest glory that had filled any Temple. Could they have recognised it, there was a spiritual glory such as the world had never seen in the mystery of His incarnation, in His sublime teaching about the Father, in the perfect purity of His character, in His ineffable sympathies with sorrow, in the mysterious agonies of His soul



because of human sin. Had they rightly marked His mien, they might have discerned somewhat of the glory which Isaiah saw when he spake of Him. Had they looked upon Him with spiritual and loving eyes, He would have been transfigured before them. "In him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The first house was the manifestation of the Father, the second house is the manifestation of the incarnate Son.

It is only an upper room in Jerusalem, a sequestered and modest place of prayer, altogether without material splendours. To an onlooker the conditions would appear mean. Not far distant is the august Temple that Herod has restored, its sacrifice blazing, its incense ascending, its gorgeously-arrayed priests performing their ritual, Levites chanting jubilant psalms, Scribes expounding the law and the prophets. It is the national Temple, the Established Church of the people, and multitudes of devotees throng its stately courts.

The number of the disciples is about one hundred and twenty, a few peasants and ministering women. Neither altar nor sacrifice nor priest gives sanction to their worship; not even their Master is with them as heretofore; no sign from heaven has consecrated the place, or given assurance to their hearts—they are simply a few men and women praying. But power from on high comes upon them; the promise of the Father is fulfilled; men are "pricked in their hearts;" spiritual gifts are conferred; spiritual transformations are wrought. Excited multitudes crowd upon the apostles, and break in upon their preaching and praying with the passionate inquiry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The gorgeous Temple is the sepulchre of spiritual life, the upper room is its birth-chamber; three thousand souls are added to the Church, "men being saved." This was the still greater glory of the upper room.



It was not, as in the first Temple, a symbolical manifestation of the Father; it was not, as in Herod's Temple, an incarnation of the Son; it was a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in actual processes of spiritual life-giving, each individual man made a living temple. "Know ye not that *ye* are the temple of God?" It was a manifestation of God, not, as heretofore, *to* men, but *in* men—the great end for which all other manifestations were given.

This, the dispensation of the Spirit, is our own. It is the ultimate manifestation of God. Its perfect issue will be the restoration of redeemed souls to the perfect image and blessedness of God. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

Nothing external to a man can be compared in moral glory to this recreative process within him. We might bring together for the adornment of a church-building silver and gold, art and ritual, until it vied with Solomon's Temple itself. We might conceive a Shechinah-cloud over the pulpit, and the Christ Himself as the preacher in it, and yet the worshippers might be as unspiritual as these manifestations left the Jews.

But the mysterious processes of the Holy Spirit work in the very soul of the man, quickening in him the new life of the Spirit and renewing him day by day. The power that converted Peter's hearers was a greater power than that which brake the rocks of Sinai. The glory of the Day of Pentecost transcended the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration. The moral miracle that quickens a dead soul is more than the physical miracle that raises Lazarus from the dead.

It is not meant by this contrast that the older dispensations were destitute of spiritual presence and power. Messianic ideas and the workings of the Holy Spirit have characterised every dispensation. Christ

is the only way to God ; quickenings of spiritual life are the only true religiousness. Without spiritual realisation there can be no worship. Who can imagine David performing a mere ritual, or think of his passionate songs as a mere form of prayer ?

But we cannot conceive of worship without fitting form of ritual embodiment. Every human feeling finds expression in material forms of speech or act. Even a silent Quaker's meeting is a material assemblage for the purpose of spiritual excitement and expression. Our hymns are praise in prearranged words and music ; our prayers find expression in human speech. Constituted as we are, "it needs a body to keep a soul."

Nor does it follow, because of the spiritual character of our Christian dispensation, that our methods of worship are of little importance, and may be slovenly and impoverished. Difference of worship-form there must be. Wherever there is true worship there is God's house. Jacob found it in the Syrian desert ; the early Christians in dens and caves of the earth ; Huguenots and Covenanters worshipped on mountain-sides ; humble men in cottage rooms and village barns ; seamen in smoky cabins ; prisoners in condemned cells. Wesley preached to Bristol miners at the mouths of their pits ; Whitfield to London costermongers in Moorfields, and there, amid discordant "Hallelujahs" or broken words of penitence, God manifested Himself in fulness of spiritual glory.

But it does not follow that their necessity should be our choice ; that, with liberty, wealth, and culture, with ceiled houses, august temples of commerce, sumptuous theatres of pleasure, the house of God is to be exceptional in its selfish parsimony, and repellent in its ascetic discomfort.

If spiritual worship does not consist in lavish ornament, neither does it in repulsive baldness. Selfishness is apt to disguise itself in the subtle garb

of spirituality. If there be waste in the precious ointment which love lavishes, is there not something worse than waste in the demur which is made to it. What love is worthy that is not lavish in its offerings? Is, then, love to God to be stinted by the plausible spirituality of mere selfishness? Is everything that it brings to be sublimated by the tests of a spurious spirituality, or to be reduced by arithmetic to the cold measure of utility? If our love build a house for God, are we to enshrine the jewel of our worship in a coarse, repulsive casket? Should not its adornments have some congruity with the wealth and social habits of those who build it?

Jacob, the exile, has visions of God as he sleeps upon his stone at Bethel; David, the king, will build Him a house; while Mary opens to herself the heart of her Lord by breaking over His feet her box of spikenard.

True, He who "dwells not in temples made with hands" needs neither gilded columns nor gorgeous ritual, even to assure Him of our love. Jesus did not so need Mary's spikenard; but, because it was love spontaneously offering its best, He lovingly receives, generously commends it, and gives it an everlasting memorial. Nothing is too costly if it be an offering of love; nothing is too poor if it be all that love can bring. It is a cold love that nicely calculates; the love that does not is often called extravagant by that which does.

The impulse that prompts us to offer our best to God is holy and noble, and it is wronged by our refusal. Love itself is narrowed by its niggardliness of offering. When we lavish upon ourselves what is costly and beautiful, and bring to God only parsimonious offerings, the very heart of love is damaged and destroyed. It can live only in expression.

The house that God has built for us is adorned with rich and varied beauty, filled with a thousand



things for new delight—colour and form, tree and flower, gleaming sunshine and moving cloud—the beautiful, as well as the useful. Shall we, then, in building our temples for His worship, restrict their provisions to the stones of the wall and the timber of the seats?

It is one thing to confound material forms with spiritual offerings; it is another to be coarsely careless or meanly parsimonious in the offering that we bring. We may vitiate even our own benefaction by our mode and temper of giving. Nothing that we *can* offer can bear a worthy proportion to His majesty, but it may indicate our reverent sense of it.

We might adduce the constituents of our worship in demonstration of its spiritual glory.

(1) The Bible, for instance, as the revelation and law of our religious life. May we not designate it a marvellous historic and permanent incarnation of the Holy Spirit?

Mutely it lies upon the desks of our pulpits, but how wonderfully it informs our thought and inspires our heart! A Divine revelation of God's thoughts and purposes in Jesus Christ—but not, like other religious books, in the form of theological treatises and authoritative precepts—it is a historical record of God's dealings with men at different stages of their religious development. At sundry times, and little by little, God spake to our fathers by the prophets, in the latter days by His Son. It is the Divinest, the most authoritative, of all revelations, and yet it affirms no theory of its own inspiration, and vainly and foolishly we seek to supply the defect by formulating theories of inspiration for it.

When the Divine incarnates itself in the human, no theory of it is possible. All that we can do is to recognise the result, and demonstrate that both the Divine and the human are there; so it is in personal life, so it is in Providence, so it is in the person of



Christ, so it is in the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. The Divine and the human blend in an incarnate whole, and who shall discriminate their elements? Divine thought and the quickenings of Divine life are embodied in human experiences. The evidence that compelled Nicodemus to say of the Christ, "Master, we know that thou art from God;" that compelled the Pharisees to say, "Never man spake like this man;" that compelled the centurion to say, "Truly this man was the Son of God;" compels us to say of the Bible, Truly this is the Word of God.

What can be more incontestably Divine than its revelations of the very thought and heart and purpose of God; what more truly human than its forms of human thought, its limitations of human knowledge, tenderness, and sympathy, the personal experiences and emotions, the throbbing heart, the unmistakable individuality of every book, of every page?

And what can be more indissolubly one: the marvellous congruity of Divine thought and purpose through forty generations; the first promise to Abraham fulfilled in Christ; Christ coming not to destroy, but to fulfil all the Divine idea that had been embodied in the law and the prophets before Him? From Genesis to Revelation one grand idea of Divine character and human salvation, gradually developed by some forty writers of different books, and in almost every form of literature, from history to sacred drama.

Is it not a conclusive proof of the Divine inspiration of the Bible that it propounds no theory of its own inspiration? A book less Divine would have been more imperative in its claims.

Or, if we look to its *spiritual power*—its power to quicken and sanctify religious life—its glory far transcends that of the cloven tongues, the miraculous gifts of Pentecost. It is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing

asunder of soul and spirit. What a mighty practical power it has of lofty spiritual ideas, of holy spiritual life! What moral force that the world possesses can be compared with it? It is one of the moral miracles of human experience; it satisfies every spiritual imagination of a man; it is adequate to every religious necessity. We consult it as an oracle; we submit ourselves to it as a law of life; all our preaching is contained in it; it talks with us in the morning; we hide it in our hearts that we may not sin. It is the devotional manual of our closets, the teacher of our families; its wisdom directs us; its principles inspire us; its precious promises comfort and animate us; it "makes us wise unto salvation." Little children learn from it their incipient religiousness; busy men, struggling, wearied, tempted, sinful, find it the only anchor of their soul; dying men read or remember it; and when all other voices are silenced it fills them with a sure and certain hope. It is the word of eternal life. Where is the religious oracle that in moral glory can compare with the Bible?

(2) So we might speak of the distinctive ideas of Christian theology.

For instance, the unique *conception of God* that inspires our worship.

A purely spiritual, a perfectly holy and righteous, an infinitely loving and merciful God; so represented in the earliest records of the Bible in the midst of Pagan deities, centuries before Homer sang or Plato lived. So that, save in our increasing knowledge of Him, there is no change in Biblical representations of Him. The God of Abraham is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; so unspeakable in His goodness, His pity, His tenderness, that in order to represent His transcendent love, Jesus Christ has to exhaust all our most endearing conceptions of fatherhood. All the common attributes of deity, almightiness, omniscience, holiness, goodness, enshrined and

glorified by the tender love of fatherhood. Think of a worship, think of a religious fellowship of which this is the inspiring sentiment. Dread, an impossible feeling; entreaty, a superfluous prayer. More ready to forgive than we to ask; more ready to bless than we to receive. "Waiting to be gracious;" preventing us by "the blessing of His goodness;" even sacrificing Himself for our salvation. He "spares not his only begotten Son, but freely delivers him up for us all." What a sentiment of religious life and relationships and worship it is.

(3) Think again of the representation of Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God.

A presentation of perfect manhood in the struggling, suffering, responsible conditions of human life; "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;" passing through all the natural stages of human life, discharging all duties, exemplifying all excellences, no man convincing him of sin, the one perfect man of human history. And combined with all this a human sympathy, tenderness, pity, self-sacrifice, that are equally peerless. "A brother born for the day of adversity," "touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" a benevolence beautified with every thoughtfulness, delicacy, and gracious service; so that John has to say, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Whatever the historic truth of this record, the conception and the delineation of it are the most wonderful and glorious ever presented to human thought. Think of a worship with such an inspiration! Beyond all conceivable teaching, the personal representation of Jesus of Nazareth inspires us. With what sedulousness we imitate Him; with what consecration we serve him; with what rapture we worship him! We "put on Christ."



Add to this idea of His incarnation the still more wonderful conception of His *atonement for sin*.

The moral grandeur of its *root idea*—that even love may not set aside righteousness for its gratification; that in the forgiveness of sins even God must show forth His righteousness as well as His mercy,—how our moral sense responds to it! Were it possible for God to forgive my sin of His mere pitiful feeling—for bygone transgressions to be simply blotted out; for the dishonour put upon holiness and law to have no reparation—my self-interest might be satisfied, but my conscience, my sense of right, would be wounded; just as it would be if the benevolence of a magistrate turned away the righteous penalty from a wrong-doer. A man is not saved who evades righteous punishment or who breaks prison.

The conception of Christ's atonement is of homage paid to the holiness that has been desecrated, to the righteousness that has been violated. In this I can have perfect moral satisfaction. My conscience is satisfied with the conditions of my forgiveness. God is a just God as well as a Saviour; He declares not His love only, but His righteousness in the remission of sins. Again I say, whichever may be the actual fact, there can be no question which is the grander in moral idea.

If again I think of *the way in which atonement is made* I see the same transcendent moral glory. Because atonement cannot be made by those who have sinned, "God spares not his only begotten Son." He becomes incarnate, that as a proper and perfect man—a partaker of the nature of those who have sinned—He might suffer and die.

Not to appease an angry feeling in God by an oblation of human blood, as we be slanderously affirmed to maintain. How can physical blood-shedding atone for moral guilt? Is it not written that "God so loved the world that he gave his only



begotten Son?" Did not Christ Himself say, "Therefore the Father loveth me because I lay down my life for the sheep?" Is it not time that men should forbear these mendacious representations, and reverently and candidly, simply consider what the New Testament teaches concerning the atoning sacrifice of Christ?

What did He suffer? Not merely the physical death of the cross, there could be no sin-offering in that. It was only the outward symbol of His spiritual crucifixion, His agony of soul—as in Gethsemane—when no human hand touched Him, and when He prayed, being in an agony, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

It could not be the literal anguish of the sinner's hell. *He* could have no sense of baseness, no anguish of remorse, no consciousness that sin had separated between Him and God. To represent Christ as in this sense having our sins laid upon Him, or imputed to Him, is to affirm a moral fiction; there can be nothing that is not actually real in the processes of Christ's atonement.

Is it not enough to recognise His anguish as that of a holy man realising the sins of his brother men; the feeling as of a virtuous father over a reprobate son; the feeling as of a pure mother over a fallen daughter; a feeling of anguish often keener than that of the wrong-doer himself, because of his purer, more sensitive soul.

Was not this a homage to the essential right of holiness and to the essential wrong of sin; was not this a vicarious suffering for sin—the holy man suffering this unspeakable anguish because of the sin of his brother man? Was not this manifestly to magnify the law and to make it honourable; a demonstration to all men that transgression of righteous law inevitably involves penalty?

Again I say, whatever the actual truth may be as

to the conditions of forgiveness, there is in this conception a perfect naturalness; the absence of everything that is unreal, or arbitrary, or unjust—a transcendent moral glory. "Righteousness and peace kiss each other." Both conscience and heart join in thankful recognition. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

(4) So the conception of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the Christian church is transcendent in its glory. An economy of simple truth, appealing to the reason and heart of men, and made effective by the mystic processes of life wrought by the Holy Spirit. Precisely as in the economy of physical life God makes food the sustenance of life; or as in the field God giveth the increase to the seed-corn.

Truth alone will not produce spiritual life any more than food alone will produce physical life. Men have always had more truth than they have realised. The coming into our life of higher truth is like receiving better food, it is the entrance of a greater moral force for the production of life; the life-giving is the essential thing, not the word of life only, but the entrance of life. Do we not feel the moral grandeur of the imperative demand even upon the righteous Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." Religiousness is an inward life as well as an outward act. "Neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

II. Which brings us to the other great condition of moral glory—viz., that if the place of God's feet is to be made glorious, the Divine manifestation must produce its proper spiritual effects upon the worshippers. Here, then, all the distinctive characteristics of church life present themselves for consideration. I cannot, of course, speak of them in detail, any more than I can of the constituents of Christian theology, but they are all contributive elements of moral glory.

(1) Think, for instance, of the conception and

culture of Christian holiness in the church. Every command of Sinai, every precept of righteousness, spiritually interpreted and applied to the inmost heart of a man; not only must he *do* holy things, he must *be* a holy man—holy in every feeling, faithful in every responsibility, loving in every relationship. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and soul and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself.” “Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

Again I say, whatever the actual, practical realisation, the moral conception of a holy character is perfect and sublime. Nor is it a mere “counsel of perfection.” As a simple matter of fact it *has* produced the noblest practical life that the world has seen. No men so strenuously strive after holiness or realise such a godly sensitive sanctity. We “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

In transformations of personal character, in the conversion of individual men—often from the grossest wickedness to the most strenuous holiness—in the elevation of common goodness in men to saintliness of feeling, nobleness of character, consecration of service and self-sacrificing love; or, again, in the inspiration of philanthropic and purifying enterprises, benevolent institutions, and beneficent achievements, the Church of Christ stands supreme. Scarcely can we imagine the condition of the world, destitute of Christian agencies and influences. Annihilate Christian churches, neutralise Christian influences, exclude Christian sentiments, and what to-day would be the character and condition of our English towns and villages? Even as tested by actual experience, did our Lord exaggerate when he said of Christian disciples, “Ye are the light of the world, ye are the salt of the earth?”



(2) And to the moral glory of Christian character add the moral glory of Christian worship, the beauty of holiness in a worshipping assembly,—men in pure spirituality of conception and in radical love of heart “bowing down before the Lord their maker,” realising His presence, expressing their reverence and love, and consecrating their service.

What a lofty imagination inspires it! Sometimes in their cynical unspiritualness or flippancy men sneer at the worship of a Puritan or a Quaker assembly as being prosaic and unimaginative. Partial and ascetic it may be, forgetful that men consist of body as well as soul, but surely not unimaginative. Rather must we say, that *so* to realise God; to see the invisible, to be spiritually absorbed in His worship, is the very highest imaginative effort of a man.

We provide no visible symbol, we erect no material altar, we bring no sacrificial offerings, we perform no sumptuous rites, we are urged by no sensuous excitements. To a mere observer of outward things it is but an ordinary assembly of men and women. Simple words are uttered, spiritual truths are set forth, the appeal is solely to intellectual conception and to religious consciousness. Our worship depends upon neither consecrated place nor ordained priest, only upon what we ourselves are and feel in God's spiritual presence. “Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Surely the lack of imagination is with those who need an elaborate ceremonial appealing to the physical sense, to enable them to realise spiritual things.

To the spiritual eye is there not in worship such as this a surpassing glory? It is the direct spiritual communion with God of each individual heart. Man's heart speaking to God its love and need; God speaking to man his love and blessing. However vast the



assembly, each individual heart waits upon God; however consentaneous the common hymn or prayer, each puts into it an individual and confidential meaning, utters its own deepest and most personal feeling; and yet the common act, the common presence, the common grace, blends all individual prayers and feelings into one great worshipping heart of love and praise.

Surely pompous rite and processional pageantry and priestly interposition are an intrusion here—a lessening of the pure spiritual glory. Does not elaborate rite hamper and hinder simple spiritual feeling? Is it not a cumbrous robe that embarrasses the foot of our approach to God; a coloured medium that obscures the pure vision of faith; a prescribed performance that distracts the worshipping thought and checks the worshipping impulse? We may not say that it absolutely disables spiritual worship; but it makes it so difficult that men adopt it as a substitute, and commonly it is the barometer of spiritual decay.

Men thirsting for the living God and coming to seek Him are impatient of cumbrous forms; they tolerate only such forms as are the unconscious vehicles of vivid thought and rapturous feeling. Only when the Israelites lost their sense of the spiritual presence of Jehovah did they make a golden calf to represent Him. Is not much of the elaborate ritual that men construct as a medium of approaching God a perilous approximation to that great sin? If we would realise the true glory of worship we shall surely find it where men the most directly approach God—each heart expressing its spiritual feeling and realising God's spiritual blessing. The place of such worship is in its glory more awful than Sinai, in its sanctity more holy than the mercy seat in the temple.

These, my friends, are the constituents of the

glory with which we seek to fill this "place of God's feet."

Here, when His worshippers are gathered together, Christ will "be in the midst of them," and will "manifest Himself unto them as He does not unto the world." Here penitence will smite upon its breast, and faith lift up its eye, and the mysterious processes of spiritual life be wrought, and the glorious sanctities of the Christian character be perfected. "Of this and of that man it shall be said, 'He was born there,' and 'the Highest himself shall establish her.'"

What other places have such associations? What other acts and processes of men have such sublimity? What other assemblies of men are crowned with such moral glory? Where else do men so nearly touch the spiritual—so immediately look into the face of God? It is the mount of human transfiguration; men shine with the spiritual glories of God, and converse with his saintliest servants. In the consciousness of this we are subdued to Jacob's feeling: "Surely God is in this place; this is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven."

But whether or not this place will actually be made glorious will depend upon those who worship in it—upon the simplicity and entireness of their dedication of it to God's glory—upon the character that they maintain as God's worshippers—upon their consecration as God's servants.

Shall the name of the house be "The Lord is there," or shall "Ichabod" be inscribed upon its portals? All depends upon the spirituality with which you worship, the sanctity of your life and fellowship, the service and self-sacrifice of your church life.

Christ may come to this temple only to drive out the money-changers, or He may come with loving purpose to heal the broken-hearted, and to appoint to them that mourn in Zion beauty for ashes, the oil of

joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Oh, brethren, amid all the toil and strife and pollution of life keep this place holy—a home for peaceful pieties—a sanctuary for blessed communings with God—a rest where your wearied souls may find comfort and blessedness; whenever you approach it put your shoes off your feet, for it is holy ground.

And if this be only the place of God's feet, what must be the glory of His throne, where they see Him as He is, worship with the new song, and know even as they are known?

“And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

[1870.]

## FAMILY LIFE.

“God setteth the solitary in families.”—PSALM lxxviii. 6.

LITERALLY, “God maketh the solitary to dwell in a house.” A promise to the Babylonian exile of restoration to the crowning blessing of social life. It may furnish occasion for saying some things about the constitution and character of family life, especially as conceived and realised among ourselves.

The promise implies the blessing; we need no demonstration of it; our strongest instincts confess it. However men may realise family life—whether in the pure refinements and joys of cultured love, or in the mere utilitarian services of simple association and dependence—all men seek it; the hard, sensuous, exacting Indian in his wigwam, as well as the refined and chivalrous European in his mansion. Family association is so universal and imperative that it can spring only out of one of the primal instincts of our nature. It was not an arbitrary law that the Creator was appointing, it was a natural necessity that He was declaring when, looking upon the man that He had just created, He said, “It is not good that the man should be alone.” He can neither develop the faculties nor satisfy the affections of his nature in solitude.

At any rate, God has so constituted us that family life is the necessity of our being; and I think it is part of His own image in which God has created us. I do not think that the supreme conception of God is a self-sufficiency that does not care for companionship. I cannot lift even the Infinite One above all



joy in the exercise of the social affections, and picture Him in His creation in lonely solitude, just as the Matterhorn is lifted above the bosom of the Alps—sublime in its altitude, but among the eternal snows. He delighteth in the habitable parts of the earth; He delighteth in the companionship, in the moral affections of His creatures, in loving and being loved; His delights are with the sons of men; He has no designation more dear to Him or to us than “Our Father who art in heaven.”

In making us instinctively crave companionship, therefore, he has made us, like Himself, to delight in intercourse—intellectual, moral, affectional—with all capable of reciprocating our feeling.

Whatever men’s theories about the origin or constitution of society, the family is an institution of God, and is founded upon great and indisputable facts of our nature.

They are such as these:—The craving for society is instinctive and imperative. It is the instinct which cements human life, which enables human brotherhood, which binds us together in mutual dependence and affection. A man who is a misanthrope and shuns his kind is regarded as a social maniac. Solitary confinement is more terrible and maddening than the severest affliction; the infancy of human life, in its prolonged weakness and dependence, makes the family society and family affections imperative; its helplessness could not be otherwise nurtured, its burdensomeness would not be otherwise borne.

The benevolent affections of our nature demand society for their activity, their culture, and their gratification. Can we conceive of the repulsiveness of a life lived alone, and caring only for itself? Our intellectual powers, again, are chiefly developed by our social life, our highest enjoyments spring out of it; the cup of life which is the sweetest is the loving cup, which we pass from hand to hand. Our nature

craves approbation and love and service; we have affinities that irrepressibly seek companionship. The family is the centre and crown of all our social relations; we do not construct it so much as find ourselves in it. Save the earliest human pair, the first consciousness of every human being is, not that he is an independent unit, having to form relations for himself, but that he is a dependent child, related to parents. His relationship is as independent of his own volition as is the relationship of the creature to the Creator. This is not the first theoretic notion, but it is the first fact of our experience. We begin life as members of a family, we are the centre of a family circle. We may isolate ourselves from our kind as we grow up, but we begin by inevitable relationships and dependence. You cannot reverse this; you cannot begin human life as it began at the creation. The family is for each of us the beginning of all life and experience. I am a related being, a being under authority, a being owing duty, a being the object of affection, and instinctively returning it.

With the family, then, all life begins. The relationship is not one of choice; it is for each of us a relationship of necessity. It is the most perfect conception of life: two beings related to each other by a tender and indissoluble tie, serving one another by no harsh law of dominion, but by the silken authority and constraint of love; and a child as their offspring, the object of a strange, mystic, instinctive, indomitable affection in both, nurtured in a sheltered home of virtue and tenderness, the love of a mother tempering the authority of a father, the love of a father modifying the weak passion of a mother: in its ideal a trinity of perfect being, of purest love and blessedness, the simplest, most powerful, most blessed of all institutions, the germ of all that is good, the sanctifying example and grace of all that is pure and beautiful in social life; the quiet, noiseless nursery of our

best affections, in which the parent is taught and softened and sanctified by the child; in which the child is nurtured in as much of human love as has survived the fall; in which, silently and unconsciously, selfishness is limited and chased away, and the first principles of duty learned, and joy and sorrow soothed and sanctified. It is not too much to say that a man is what the home of his childhood makes him. No man is a perfectly nurtured man who has had no home, or whose home has been poisoned or deteriorated in any of its great affections and virtues. The home of our childhood is with us throughout our lives—an atmosphere about us, a temper within us. It is the first mould of character, and no after influence can wholly transmute it.

No study would be more profitable than the history of the family—the ideas that have entered into it, the influences that have created its temper, the discipline that has regulated its habits, the place that it has had in the formation of nations and in the social character that they have borne: the patriarchal family, with its hierarchy and its monarchy; the family of savage tribes, with its hard selfishness and brutality; the heathen family as in Greece or Rome, corrupt and dissolute in the one, hard and despotic in the other; and the Christian family, filled with purities and refinements, with amenities of love and delicacies of respect, and self-abnegations of service, of which even Plato never dreamed.

No institution owes more to the benignant religion of Christ than the family: the elevation of woman to be the companion and counsellor and the object of chivalrous and reverent affection to man; the gentle culture of children; no longer, as in old pagan times, the mere property of irresponsible parents, when the father regarded both wife and child as mere chattels, and from whose tyranny, however brutal, and from whose power, over even life itself, there was no



appeal. Children are now regarded as a trust, not a property; parental power, the old *patria potestas*, limited in its exercise by Christian obligations, and softened by Christian affections. The penetrating, permeating feeling of our Lord's great teaching about the Father in heaven has changed the parent from a despot into a constitutional ruler, and his authority from that of stern natural right into that of loving influence. Through the generations the influence has wrought; the Christian father is less stern now, and family life more loving and free than even in the childhood of our sires. We receive our children as an entrustment from God, and under the genial and tender influence of Christianity we seek to develop in them all principles and affections that are pure and loving. We may not provoke them to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—not for our own selfish ends, but for His holy service and kingdom. They are ours only for this, that we may nurse them for God.

As we grow out of childhood our individuality and independence develop, and we take upon ourselves the responsibility of founding new families. Every time a marriage is made, a new family life begins. God made man male and female, as if the proper generic man were neither the male alone nor the female alone, but male and female both. It is not good for man to be alone, and God gives him a wife as a helpmeet for him; not a companion male, not a friend, but a wife. Marriage is the sacred bond of the family. Where marriage is disregarded, where it is permitted to deteriorate, where the conjugal tie is lightly regarded, or easily broken, or violated by unfaithfulness, or desecrated by hard, selfish contentions, family life is degraded—deprived of its most precious elements. Woman has been deposed from her proper place, and children have been deprived of their most essential nurture—the nurture of pure affection.



Throughout the world just now the elevation of the family is regulated by the sanctity of marriage.

The position of woman has ever been determined by the family; in proportion as the family has been a sacred, a pure, and blessed thing, in that proportion has woman been elevated and respected. As the uniform influence of religion has been to elevate woman—and the process is going on still; as the dominion of the parent over the child is every generation becoming more genial, moral, and loving, so is the subordination of the woman lessened. Even yet there is much to be redressed; there are disabilities and restrictions from which woman has yet to be emancipated; there is yet to come a larger development, a nobler culture, destined to render higher service to the world. God has given to woman her womanly nature; and it needs not, in order to maintain that, that either disability of law or of custom should be imposed. Nature—God—will take care of the qualities that make woman what she is.

It is not the weakness of woman that is her charm, it is her love, her tenderness, her sympathy, her motherly instinct, her religiousness, her pity. Freedom, power, such as are hers of natural right, will not deteriorate these, but rather deepen and enrich them. Make woman great intellectually and morally; make her strong by every possible culture, and free by every natural right, and you make her a more perfect and tender woman, wife, and mother. Feminine qualities are neither weak nor frail: the love, the tenderness, the faithful sympathy of woman are, perhaps, the strongest things in human nature; while surely the noblest work of life—the work of which the greatest genius, the most exquisite culture may be proud, and for which it is, after it has done its best, inadequate, is to nurse a child, to fashion its thought and heart after the image of God. Can any literature or art or public

service to which a woman can give herself vie in arduousness or moral grandeur with this? If an angel from heaven could select a task of human life the most worthy of his powers, it would not be to write a book, fashion a statue or rule an empire—it would be to tend a child. God help the conceited blindness of the woman who calls herself strong-minded and superior, because she has a smattering of art or philosophy, who scorns motherhood or neglects her nursery and relegates it to nursemaids, that she may take her part in learned life. There is no philosopher, however wise, there is no artist, however great, who can conceive an achievement so arduous or noble as the training of a child—the nurture and development of its physical powers, its intellectual mind, its moral and religious soul. Even artistically speaking, she is not a strong-minded but a weak-minded woman who is not prouder of her motherly prerogative of nursing and bringing up children—moulding them in God's image—than she would be of the achievements of a Phidias.

If, then, we would have noble, pure, and happy families, our first care must be the mothers, their utmost culture and power, their endowment with every social freedom and prerogative that can give their womanly nature full play. The nobler the woman, the richer and better the wife and the mother.

Another thing important—I had almost said essential—to the highest development of families is, that they should be early formed—in plain words, early marriages. Nothing is more contradictory to nature, more injurious to men and women, than to defer marriage until middle life, and to have children to educate when those children should have been forming families of their own. I can conceive of no greater violation of the Creator's purposes than the growing habits of our modern social life—men and women re-

fusing to marry ten or twelve or twenty years after they have reached the age which nature indicates as fitting—depriving themselves of the rich educational influences of youthful conjugal love, exposing themselves to perilous temptations, wronging their offspring in every way, and bringing to the domestic hearth only cold calculation instead of the glowing affections that have been selfishly denied their object until their force is wasted. What wonder that we have families filled with cold prudence when there should be warm affection, a deteriorated atmosphere for the nurture of children, an adulterated or enfeebled love for conjugal life?

There is no period of life when young men especially more need the strengthening and happiness of pure domestic love than when they are beginning their business or their profession. It is God's ordinance; it is one of the sweetest rewards of toil, and one of the most satisfactory retrospects of life, to have struggled up the hill together. In nine cases out of ten progress is more rapid, property is sooner acquired.

The things that in these days hinder marriage at the time that nature intends it are: first, the foolish notions or extravagant habits of women, whose manifest passion for dress and gaiety may well deter from marriage a prudent man. When a man thus early would look for a wife, he naturally looks for one who, by her quiet tastes and prudence, will help him to get on, and not by her extravagance hinder him. Next, the miserable mistake of thinking that they must begin life in a style equal to that in which their parents are ending it; hence years must pass before the means are acquired, and many pure enjoyments are sacrificed to a foolish vanity, and perhaps much more than this. Be sensible enough to begin in a cottage: nothing will give such a zest to the mansion when it is won. Next, selfish indulgence, or equally



selfish ambition. A man prefers his solitary ease and luxuries to the joyous struggle and rewards of married love. Alas! for the man who does not marry until cold prudence can control, and even substitute itself for, his love. Alas! for the woman whose husband has never been her sweetheart, and has never felt for her the inspiration of pure and passionate love. What wonder that our families are degenerate when the very fires that should kindle their affections do not exist. Prudence should ever enter into love; but, oh! it is a poor love that can sit down to the multiplication table, and calculate before it yields to sweet impulses.

If our families are to be what they should be, man and wife must not be afraid, under the inspiration of love, and in the fear of God, to link their hands together at the foot of the hill and, come weal or woe, bravely climb it together. Is such love dying out of our modern, prudent, bachelorhood society? God forbid! When the romance of love has gone, and calculations of prudence take its place, the deterioration of our social life has advanced very far. They who for love's sake take each other for better and worse, go with each other into the home they can afford to live in, and struggle together at the beginning of life, when its battle is the sorest, and gather children around their knees while their hearts are yet fresh and fervent, will form the noblest families, and will the most enjoy the good of life. Better a cottage where love is than a mansion with prudence as a substitute for it. There is only one true key in which the music of life can be set—young love. They who begin life in another key will never when a dozen years are passed be able to modulate it into this; their whole life will be a mistake—its first true principle is wanting.

I had intended to speak of children and their education as a constituent of noble family life; but this is too great a theme for a passing reference.



And I need not add that the fear of God—the beginning of all wisdom—is essential. If human love be not crowned and sanctified by Divine, it will not suffice to realise the highest good. It may do something—much even—for all virtuous love is true and good; but it will not put the crown upon married blessedness, it will not supply the most potent and essential element of the nurture of children. Let the love of God enwrap and permeate and sanctify all other love, and the family will realise the most of Eden that has survived the Fall, and anticipate the most that we can conceive of heaven.

Need I vindicate the kind of remark that I have permitted myself this morning? I hope not: I hope we have all of us learned the true and deep religiousness of our human and household affections. With these things pre-eminently—the love of man and woman, the formation of households, the nurture of children—religion has to do. Is it to shut itself up in the cloister or the church, and leave these affections which play so great and serious a part in life to the calculations of prudence, the selfishness of men, or the badinage of friends? I trow not. Religion would bless this rapturous joy as a God-given thing, would demand that nothing unworthy may be permitted to hinder or deteriorate it, would by her gracious influence sanctify it, would join together man and wife with her benediction and prayer, and would rest her chief hope of a holy family life upon the purity, enthusiasm, and unselfishness of early affections.

[1880.]

## THE RELIGIOUS SERVICE OF COMMON THINGS.

“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men ; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance : for ye serve the Lord Christ.”—COL. iii. 23, 24.

THIS is a striking example of the cogent and far-reaching ethics of Christianity, its close and imperative requirement of practical moral righteousness. Unlike some religious systems, it deals minutely and holily with the least things of daily life and duty. It is not a mere metaphysical theology or philosophy, or ecclesiasticism ; it is a religion. It binds moral law upon men, and makes righteousness and fidelity and conscientiousness the law of the inward conscience. And whenever men fail in this, as they often do, they as much violate essential Christianity as if they were to deny the being of a God, or the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Why do Christian men sometimes fail of practical righteousness, and, full of doctrinal jealousy or spiritual fervours, neglect truth and purity of life ? Why, for the same reason that some good men, who are upright and truthful, and scrupulous in moral virtues, disregard Christian theology, and never think of spiritual communion with God. They see only a part of Christianity, that part of it which they may have special affinities for, and shut their eyes to the rest.

Christianity is a more comprehensive thing than

most men conceive. It has its lofty doctrines concerning God and human nature and the future life—the sublimest of all theologies, the grandest of all philosophies, the most spiritual of all metaphysics. And a man may so think and contend for Christian beliefs as to forget that it is anything else but beliefs.

It has its fellowship with God, its realisations of spiritual inspiration and worship and prayer, of thought and feeling, and a man may so vividly realise these as to feel impatient of the plain prosaic things of every-day life; he becomes a mystic, an enthusiast, a fanatic. A man's very piety may hinder his practical usefulness and make him neglectful of ordinary moralities. It is a phenomenon often seen—a man keeping up spiritual fervours and failing in moral virtues. And so in a Christian church a man may subscribe his creed and be very fervent in his worship, and not be a hypocrite either, while his moral virtues—his truthfulness, integrity, purity—are very inferior. He simply takes part of Christianity, not the whole of it.

Christianity is as much a morality as it is a theology, or a Church worship. Every teaching of it aims at moral life. It is a great deal more than morality, it is a theological doctrine, it is a spiritual life; but the special, the supreme end of both the doctrine and the life is practical holiness.

And whatever may be the actual state of morals at any period, whatever may be the individual moral sentiment of any Christian man, it never lowers its ideal, it never compromises its principles, it never relaxes its urgencies. Morality is never made an expediency, it is a universal and imperative principle, pervading the entire life of men and ruling all their relations. In politics, in business, in personal pursuits and pleasures, a man may try to accommodate moral principles, but the sublime ideal of Christianity remains, and whenever the inconsistent man



comes back to the teachings and principles of Christ he is loftily rebuked and condemned.

The variable goodness of ages or men does not affect the great religious rule and obligation—the teaching of the Bible without and the verdict of the moral sense within. And however the morals of society or men may fluctuate, the calm, lofty, unchangeable demand of Christ remains to test and correct it. Another thing is—Jesus Christ has identified his religion with humanity in its entirety. He neither selects nor favours any particular class. He lays down no principle, makes no requirement that is not as applicable to one class as to another. He assails no rights of property, he tolerates no invasion of just liberties. Every man has talents entrusted to him for use, every man discharges common duties on broad religious principles. In all we do, we act not only towards one another, but towards Christ. Every personal duty is also a religious service. An essential part of our duty to God is our discharge of the common duties of life; there is a personal service in the most unlikely things, and there is religious obligation in every personal service. The religion of Christ penetrates life and comprehends life in everything. There is no single thought or act of a man that you can put outside religious obligation. A thousand things are unrecognised by his fellow-men. A thousand things that he does could not be claimed of him; but God imposes upon him the obligation first of essential right and then of unselfish benevolence. Every thing is a service of the Lord Christ.

I will pass by with a simple recognition the place and dignity that are here simply and almost as a matter of course assigned to Christ. He is recognised as the Lord of human life, and as the rewarder of its faithful service. We serve the Lord Christ, and we shall receive from Him the reward of



the inheritance. He is the Master of human life, whatever earthly masters may be.

Much also might be said concerning the new motive of human duty which is here set forth. We are to do everything "as to the Lord"—Christ being referred to, not the Divine Father—but He is to be the object of our service, and the approver of what we do. He is to be the religious conscience of our life, a claim for Him altogether unique, and that admits, I think, of but one interpretation and significance.

But I wish chiefly to speak on the religious character of the common service of life. Great emphasis is put upon this by the reference here to the service of slaves. These Christian slaves are faithfully to serve even arbitrary and cruel masters, and their service will be counted as a service to Christ.

But is not this a recognition and sanction of slavery? Ought not the incitement to have been resistance and revolt? Why is it that Christianity tolerated the social institutions amid which it was born—the despotism of the monarch, the vassalage of his subjects, the tyranny of masters, the bondage of slaves? Slavery especially, proprietorship and traffic in human flesh, is so abhorrent to all natural justice and morality, that we put the brand of social anathema upon the civilised nation that practises it. It existed in the most revolting forms in countries into which the apostles introduced Christianity; and yet Christianity pronounced no indignant condemnation of it, and did not demand its immediate abolition.

It is purely a question of procedure. No one can deny that the entire spirit and genius of Christianity—that its every principle and sympathy is intensely antagonistic to slavery, and that where Christianity does its proper work slavery is extinguished by it. The Christian religion came into the world

simply to create a new and holy spiritual life, which by its inward moral force should constrain universal righteousness and benevolence. It did not begin with forms of civil government or organised societies of men. It began with the individual man, and with his inward heart and conscience, rather than with his forms of life. It trusted to the new life that it created, to the spiritual conscience that it illumined, for the effectual reform of all wrong institutions and habits. To have begun with these would have been a very shortsighted policy, and would have ended in a very inadequate reformation, perhaps in the localising of Christianity, in stamping it with a conventional character; certainly it would have made its work far more difficult. It would have arrayed against it all the social forces and prejudices of organised life.

Its method is far wiser, far more radical; it inculcates principles, it changes feelings, it creates sympathies which radically transform all social and individual life. Leaving social institutions as they were, our Lord simply, and with profoundest wisdom, addressed Himself to the conscience and heart of the individual man, and created a new life there, a silent but mighty and effective corrector of all that was wrong. He purified the stream at its source.

Christianity even enjoins submission to the laws of society, however iniquitous, until moral convictions shall have wrought their change. The apostle enjoins even upon Roman slaves that they be subject not only for wrath, but for conscience sake. They are to abide in the same calling wherein they are called, and to console themselves by remembering that there is no respect of persons with God. Paul sends back Onesimus to Philemon, simply appealing in a noble and tender way to Christian principle and feeling. The consolation is that, morally and spiritually, all are on a perfect equality. "He that is called in the Lord, being a slave, is the Lord's free

man; while he that is called being free is the slave of Christ:" thus both reconciling men to the inequalities of their lot, and quietly and effectively working their redress. This is the spiritual method of Christianity.

Here the injunction is, that notwithstanding the iniquity of their bondage, they are to render a faithful and hearty service, obeying their masters in all things, not merely as a social duty to them, but as a religious duty to God. This principle is involved, that so far from the secular duties of life being limited in their reference and character to the persons and obligations around us, they have a high religious reference and result.

Nothing is more common than for men to speak of certain actions as being naturally and essentially distinct from other actions, religious or secular, as the case may be. The assumption is that in the great bulk of our common-life duties, our labour and our merchandise, our professional and literary pursuits, our literature and art, and social recreations, there is no necessarily religious character. Men engaged in these pursuits as the business of their lives may find time to attend to religious things, and may attain to religious character and temper; but we do not think of them as inherently involving the exercise of the principles and motives of religion, or as being part of its duty and discipline of life.

When we speak of men as engaged in the service of Christ, we think of public worship or evangelising work. We think of ministers of religion, set apart to expound and urge the truths of Christ, and to claim for religious interest at least a proportion of men's time and care. We think of missionaries consecrating their lives to the great conflict of Christianity with barbarism and idolatry; or we think of deacons, or evangelists, or school teachers, devoting some portion of their time to religious work. And



we think of attendance upon public worship, of private devotions, and of religious deportment when great temptations come or great issues of right and wrong have to be determined. But we do not often think of a man as actively engaged in the service of Christ when he is buying and selling, or ploughing a field, driving a cab, or sweeping a crossing. We make a great moral distinction between things that we call sacred and things that we call secular; and we think of these as somewhat antagonistic; the secular as, to say the least, preventive of that progress in religion which, but for them, we should make. If we had not this common work to do, and could be always in church, or engaged in religious things, how much better religiously we should be!

Now, if this estimate be a right one, it presents human life in an aspect that is very mournful, almost appalling; for, beyond all doubt, there is nothing in life so important as the formation of religious character and the securing of religious interests. If, then, I am doomed to spend ten or twelve hours of each workday in occupations which prevent religious culture and attainment, and my only chance of holiness is during the jaded intervals of weekday work and on the Sabbath, when I can go to God's house and repair the religious damage I have sustained, it is a melancholy condition of human life. It gives the leisurely a far better chance of moral goodness and of heaven than the busy. For if you make religion the distinct pursuit of life, he will the most successfully attain to it who has the most leisure. Unhappy indeed is the worker's lot. For these pursuits are indispensable; they are the lot that God has ordained for us, so that it comes to this: men's actual and indispensable duty in life has no part in securing the moral ends of life. The whole heaven-appointed activity, the care, the occupation, the industry of my daily existence is at war with the moral character and



ends of it. It is my duty, therefore, to leave it as soon as I can, and to lessen it as much as I can; to leave my ploughing and my merchandise, and to betake myself to some church or prayer-meeting or religious mission.

I think this is not a true theory of life. This passage gives us a much nobler conception. The Christian slave of a heathen master may in the faithful discharge of his daily duties be doing a religious thing; he may serve the Lord Christ. If any condition could be imagined too servile, or inimical to religious service and character, it is surely the services that might be exacted of a heathen slave; and yet the apostle claims these as a religious service of Christ. He does not tell these slaves that in the midst of their sorrowful oppressions they may find time for thus serving; but that their very occupations were a service of Christ. An emphatic teaching of the fitness and religiousness of every true service of life. He is the holiest man who in the holiest way discharges the duties of his calling.

No matter what department of human life you take, this principle holds good. It may be a high religious service. Christianity concerns itself with everything in human life; there is a religion of toil as great and sacred as the religion of worship.

It is not all physical drudgery—a stretching of the sinews and a straining of the limbs to tasks. We may not think exclusively of strenuous toils and besetting cares, of the sad necessity of weariness to the body, perplexities to the mind, and care to the heart, or of the humiliation of having to spend so large a part of every day in unprofitable tasks. We can think of all this as part of our religious culture and expression; toil enters into the moral grandeur of human lives, into the supreme greatness of our spirits. The evils of toil are its accidents—the crowded manufactory, the bustle and energy and

selfishness of the market, the anxious trader, the sickly artisan, the jaded shopman, the weary porter, the feverish and immoral competition. These are not the whole of toil, they are not even its necessities: they are its perversions and accidents. Beneath all these there is the sphere of moral duty and feeling, the sense of obligation to God and man, the maintenance of right, the heart of endurance and patience and faith, the spirit of human helpfulness and social order and divine purpose. All the active principles and affections of the religious life may find full play. They never can be laid aside or reduced to a condition of suspended animation. Man labours for more than secular ends. Warm affections stimulate his weary hands, a kind of natural sanctity is thrown over his toil by thoughts of his home, his wife and children, for whom he is providing. Why do these toils go on at all? The man might satisfy personal necessities with far less. Is there not religiousness of a very high kind in the provision thus made for the clothing and feeding of the family, for the education of children, for the need of sickness and the infirmities of age, for the feebleness of women and the helplessness of children?

Rough as may be the manner, and harsh as may be the words of many of these sons of toil, beneath it all this natural religiousness of purpose and of feeling works in its inarticulate way, needing only to be sanctified by Christ's Gospel to become an intelligent service of Him.

There is religiousness, too, in the very spirit in which we accept toil as an ordinance of God, and in the uses we make of it for moral discipline, and in the temper in which we bear its burdens. What a means it is of restraining evil and developing good; what a mine of virtues; what a school of improvement! How much better we learn patience and gentleness, and righteousness and magnanimity, when

thus exercising them, than in the excited feelings, the theoretic purposes of the closet or the sanctuary.

And what a grand witness of the power of godliness it is when in his counting-house or his shop, in his profession or his handicraft, a man maintains his steadfast righteousness, and refuses to swerve to the right or left for advantage. Whatever the worth of beauty or holiness in worship, it is far greater in common work, and far more difficult to maintain. A man is just as much discharging a religious duty and cultivating his religious character when thus plying his handicraft or selling his goods, or rendering his menial service, as when praying in his closet or worshipping in God's house. If a man will do his common business upon religious principles, and in a religious spirit, he will have as fine opportunities of serving and glorifying God as if he were engaged in the services of the Church or by the beds of the dying.

We shall never conceive of religion aright if we distinguish times and places and things of life as specially belonging to it. It must rule the whole of our life, and take up into its sanctions its veriest trifle. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we must do it to the glory of God.

What a grand incentive it is to do well and heartily the every-day work of life, that Christ regards it as a service to Himself. We are not, therefore, to grudge the time and strength given to these common services, or to discharge them with languor or with impatience. We are to put heartiness into them, as being a service of Christ. Whatever glorifies Him should be heartily done, and He may be more glorified by the way we do our work than by the way we do our worship. What can be a greater honour to the religion of Christ than such a proof of its power, that it so possesses us and rules us that we never for a moment forget Him or the principles of life which He enjoins?



The act that is not heartily done as unto Christ—that is done grudgingly and by compulsion—cannot be a religious act. What a grand law of life and responsibility it is! How it gathers all the things of human life, and puts upon them the stamp of divine approval and possibility!

Are there not many even of formal religious duties that are not done heartily as unto the Lord, but ritually, languidly, coldly; our want of earnestness manifest in every movement; irregularity in work, frequent neglect of worship, perfunctory service when working at all?

How often our contributions are grudged or stinted. It is not every giver who is a cheerful one, who feels that the privilege is in giving—the blessedness for him that gives more than for him that receives.

To serve the Lord Christ is motive enough. If He will accept any form of our poor service, surely we should be glad and eager to render it.

And then there is “the reward of the inheritance.” However the earthly master may regard our service, or refuse to reward it even with his thanks, He whom we serve is not unmindful; He will reward it, not merely with wages—the commercial equivalent of service—but with the inheritance of sons, the realised character and blessedness of fidelity. The reward of true service is in what we become, not in what is given to us. The ruler of five cities becomes by his faithful rule qualified to rule ten cities. It is inheritance, not wages; an inward moral process, making us noble sons of God, not an arbitrary gift.

And the emphasis of the whole is, that the teaching here, and throughout Scripture, is that preparation for the future life consists in a faithful discharge of the common duties of this one, not so much of its religious services as of its daily tasks. The future life is prepared for by the qualities of character that we develop, by the exercise of a daily conscience, by the



practice of daily virtues, and by the discipline of daily duty. The future life is simply the continuance of this ; and he the best prepares for life after death who is faithful in things before death. He alone properly lives who makes the best of both worlds, who is true to every service and possibility of life. He only is the religious man who is religious in all things, who builds up the being that he is, who lives under the powers of the world to come. It is by patient continuance in well doing that we inherit glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. \*

And thus the inheritance may be the meed of all alike ; the patient slave of a heathen master may be meetening for it as much as the missionary or the martyr who is filling the church with the renown of his achievements. Let us but consecrate whatever may be our life, make every work a service, and so shall the commonest duties work out for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

[1878.]

## UNTIL HE COME.

## A COMMUNION SERMON.

"Ye do shew, the Lord's death till he come."—1 COR. xi. 26.

NOTHING is more remarkable in Christianity, considering its Jewish development and period, than the characteristic absence from it of ritual ordinances, the perfect freedom and spirituality of its church fellowship. That our Lord intended His disciples to associate together in religious fellowship is certain. But He did not prescribe any particular method of so doing. He laid down no plan, He appointed no order, He gave no rules for the formation of Christian churches. Associate yourselves together for the brotherhood, the edification, the joy of your Christian life. Not a word beyond this general requirement can be found in the New Testament. The form of our social fellowship, the regulations of its worship and service are left entirely to ourselves. Religious teachers and pastors there must be, and deacons to administer its secular affairs, but we have no prescriptions concerning them. All is left to the promptings and expediencies of Christian brotherhood.

Nothing can be freer and more flexible than the ideas of the New Testament concerning church life and worship. Our modern ecclesiastical conceptions and controversies are the deteriorations and hardenings of the tendency in us that finds it difficult to believe in purely spiritual forces, and that has a deep distrust of liberty.

And if this be true of the church organisations, it is also true of what we call church ordinances—worship, ritual, work ; all are left to the expediency and preference of religious men.

Our Protestant reformers thought that they had advanced very far towards pure spirituality when they reduced the seven sacraments of the corrupt Church of Rome to two—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. And yet even these have been the germs out of which the modern sacramentarianism of the English Establishment has developed—the points round which the monstrous pretensions of its priestcraft have gathered. So much of the old sacramentarian leaven was retained as virtually to have leavened the whole lump.

Is there not room for the suspicion that the true idea of these ordinances has not yet been reached by that Church ? Can the Divine Lord have ordained in His Church sacraments of such a character as almost uniformly and inevitably to develop into priestism and superstition ?

Can either baptism or the Lord's Supper in any strict sense be called Church ordinances at all ? Baptism is an ordinance not so much within the Church as at its threshold. It was not ordained by Christ, it was simply adopted. John the Baptist baptised before Him, so did the Jews, so did even pagans. Our Lord simply adopted the customary method of receiving and declaring disciples. He did not devise a new mode, but gave His sanction to one already existing, as being in every way simple and suitable. When a dispute arose about it between John's disciples and His at Enon, He did not think it important enough to take part in it, but went into Galilee, leaving John's disciples to continue their baptising, and it is not said that He Himself ever baptised again. Exactly in the same spirit Paul, while accepting baptism as the mode of receiving disciples which Christ had sanctioned, thanked God that he himself had baptised but few.

And yet out of this simple and accidental initial rite of discipleship priestism has developed a theory of baptismal regeneration, and our Baptist brethren have conditioned it upon the entirely new test of spiritual conversion.

Was the Lord's Supper, when instituted, a church ordinance at all? Certainly no organised church existed. It is only by a figure of speech that the little company of the twelve can be called a church; they were a fellowship, not an organisation. Not a word is said about the relation of the Lord's Supper to the church when it should come into existence. Was not the idea of it social, not ecclesiastical? It was simply a commemoration of personal love, and as such it was afterwards observed. The disciples brake bread, not in churches only, but from house to house. They did this in remembrance of Christ whenever and wherever in their social life their love prompted them to do it. No doubt they did it in their church assemblies—it could not be omitted. It is pre-eminently a social ordinance, an ordinance for the church fellowship. Nay, it is probable that the first assemblies of the church met simply for the purpose of observing it, and that all other worship gathered round it.

But what simple associations the churches were. How we have stiffened them and made them formal and authoritative! No one thought of the presence of an apostle or minister as essential to breaking bread. We forsooth cannot observe the Lord's Supper without one. The evil is not in placing the observance in the midst of our church assemblies—they are its most natural and convenient place—but in permitting ecclesiastical superstitions to overshadow it. In the church we gather round the Lord's Table, but not as round an altar for church sacrifice, not as an ecclesiastical corporation giving validity to it by our church character, but as a simple brotherhood of Christian men, who



love Christ and together remember Him, who may or may not be ecclesiastical church members. Its conditions are spiritual, not ecclesiastical. It is enough if we be men of spiritual hearts—men who love Christ and have a thankful remembrance of His death. It has no necessary connection with a church building, nor with a ritual service, nor with ecclesiastical membership. It is a fellowship of loving remembrance for all who love Christ, whatever else they may be, and is equally valid anywhere, whoever be the administrator, in a common dwelling, on the mountain side, in the cabin of a ship, in catacombs or prisons, wherever true hearts seek Christ. It is not an ecclesiastical ordinance, it is a social one, instituted before all organised churches, and for the simple fellowship of disciples.

This great commemoration of Christian love is of a death. Why a death rather than a life, a teaching, a holiness, a benevolence? No life is so full of light and goodness and love as the life of Christ. In no life is there so much to be remembered. But it is not His life, not His incarnation, that the Lord's Supper specially commemorates, or that is the distinctive theme and power of Christian preaching. There is no reasoning away this peculiarity of Christian commemoration. If Unitarianism be right, this great commemoration exaggerates the death of Christ and perverts the sentiment of natural sorrow for His death into a morbid feeling, of abnormal importance. It is not too much to say that all the emphasis of Christian teaching, all the distinctiveness of Christian spiritual power, lie in Christ's death. We do not so think of other martyrs. Paul and Peter died as martyrs; Socrates and John Huss—how rarely we even think of their death. When we study their teachings or commemorate their work, it is their life-work that we think of, their death is a subordinate incident. When we read Plato we think only of

Socrates' wise teaching, his death scarcely intrudes upon our thoughts. Who thinks of Paul's death as we read his history or his letters? It is not even recorded. But in this commemoration we distinguish the death of Christ from everything else connected with Him. He ordained this feast to preserve the memory of it; surely the strangest of all commemorations, the strangest of all ordinances! a feast to commemorate a death, a feast around a cross, at the door of a sepulchre. His life is subordinate to His death; the death gives its significance to the life.

Then did He come a minister of darkness, of despair? If His death was simply the extinction of the light of His life, it is for a sorrow, not for a joy. What can there be in that to celebrate in a feast? Other deaths are celebrated in requiems, funeral orations, days of mourning; this death by a eucharist. Not His life, not His resurrection, but His death is to be thus commemorated with the joyous love of a feast. And with this every other allusion to it accords. It was His "lifting up" that was to draw all men unto Him. Moses and Elias spake with Him about "the decease that he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Paul preached "Christ crucified," and would "know nothing else among men."

All this is utterly inexplicable on the theory of the ordinary termination of a life. Christ Himself could never have asked us to commemorate His martyrdom unless more than the loss of life had been in it. Only the common conception of His death as an atonement, as a sacrifice for the sin of the world, can explain it in any rational way. We are to commemorate His death because from it our true life flows. His grave was not the tomb of life, it was the womb. Death is in many ways the gate of life. His death was the gate of the world's life; all the great ideas of spiritual life through Him are centred in it—and we commemorate that. The relations of

His death to our life involve mysteries that are inscrutable; all theories of the Atonement, therefore, are partial and unsatisfactory. I doubt whether any philosophical explanation of it is possible. We are contented with general conceptions and the assurance of the fact; and our feast of joy commemorates His death because it is, in fact and in experience, the fount of the world's life.

And yet I think it was the personal human feeling that chiefly found expression here—"This do . . . in remembrance of me." Was He not thinking more of the love which His death expressed than of its atoning efficacy. It is the request of tender affection. He yearns to be remembered, He who so loved them as to die for them. Whenever we gather round His table we think of His personal love. He does not say, re-enact my death in figure; He does not say that miracles of stupendous mystery shall be enacted in the commemoration; He does not say, present my death afresh to God as a sacrifice. All these ideas are utterly foreign to His feelings, foreign to His words, foreign to the entire genius of Christianity. It is a simple yearning, a request to be remembered; it is the love of the human Christ that yearns, it is not the mandate of the Divine Christ that enjoins. He does not say build an altar for a sacrifice—it is a simple sitting at table; He does not speak of paten or chalice—it is simple bread and wine; He suggests no consecration of a priest—only the consecration of loving hearts. It is not so much the *Divine* Christ that the Lord's Supper commemorates as the *loving man*, Christ Jesus: His human heart craves to be remembered and loved, the Lord's Supper is His parting keepsake, and He bids us do this as a means of remembering Him. •

We are to show forth His death. From its very nature the Lord's Supper is not, like baptism, a solitary individual act. It is a common fellowship, a



participation ; we break bread together ; we show forth His death in our common relations to it, our joint participation of it. By this peculiar commemoration—breaking bread and drinking wine—we show forth His death as that in which distinctively we trust and glory. It is not Bethlehem we commemorate, it is Calvary. Our whole Christian life, our personal faith, our church fellowship, rests upon His death as its basis and root. If we are asked concerning our salvation through Christ, we show forth, not His teaching, His character, His resurrection, peerless as these were, but His death.

There is need thus perpetually to witness concerning His death as the chief expression of His love, the chief purpose of His mission. We need to keep it continually before our own thoughts and hearts. As with the keepsake of a departed friend when we look upon it, so whenever we come to the Lord's table we renew our thoughts of Him, we excite afresh our affections, we produce the tenderest moods, the deepest gratitude, the most sanctified feelings of our religious soul.

We show forth His death to one another. The Lord's Supper is the closest, strongest bond of our religious fellowship. Nothing so draws us together, nothing so hallows our memories of one another and makes them tender, as the table of the Lord. It is a true instinct that brings us there in all special church gatherings, in all solemn crises, in all seasons of thanksgiving, in all Christian partings. Our strongest emotions are here embodied ; we have not put the seal upon our affection and our joy and our fidelity until we have gathered round the table of the Lord.

What memories of it we have—personal memories, church memories. We have no other recollections so vivid, so pleasant, and so tender. There, if anywhere, the heart is softened from its hardness, redeemed from its sin, discharged of its selfishness.



How it holds the Church together in persecution! Then the Lord's Supper becomes a sacrament. How it holds us together in our dislodgments and separations! The thought of the distant traveller is of the church around the Lord's table. Our fidelity in our temporary dispersions is kept strong and fresh by it. We anticipate no moment of reunion more tenderly than round the table of the Lord, and to the world we show forth His death.

There is no tendency stronger than that of self-righteousness, the tendency to resolve all religion into mere personal goodness. We need perpetually to insist upon spiritual principles and force, upon the atoning death of Christ as the beginning of all new life, as the inspiration of all holiness. We show forth to men our trust in His death, our fellowship in it. That is the source of our life, the inspiration of its brotherhood. There is no thought that has such strength to preserve and sanctify our own souls, there is no truth that has such moral power for the redemption of the world.

"Until he come." It is a link between the two comings. We look backward to the first, forward to the second; we remember His cross, anticipate His throne.

"Death is the only thing in death that dies." Out of death the life, the triumph, the glory come. We should be orphans indeed had we not this faith, this blessed hope of the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. He fills the future as well as the past, He will "come again the second time without a sin-offering unto salvation." We live and work and wait for His glorious appearing. Our trust is in one that died, not in one that is dead, for He is alive for evermore.

While, therefore, we specially commemorate His death, it is as the condition of His more glorious life. The death is not the end, it is only the beginning;

not the issue, only the means. This commemoration is intended to carry our thoughts to the glorious consummation; it connects the sufferings of Christ with the glory that follows. He rose because He died, He is glorified because He was crucified—glorified through the moral power of His cross; “therefore God hath highly exalted Him.” And the Lord’s Supper, therefore, is the espousal of faith and hope; faith looks back to the cross, hope looks on to the crown; both fill our eye and heart with a thankful joy.

The first advent put an end to the Jewish rites and sacrifices which foreshadowed Christ, the second advent will put an end to all services and expedients for remembering Him in His absence. Christ Himself will be better than the most precious remembrance of Him, His presence will be more than His memory. We shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of His Father. “Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

May I ask you who trust in Christ and love Him, but do not come to His table, why you neglect a commemoration so touchingly solicited, so tender in its associations with the greatest proof of His love, so singularly beautiful in its character, and practically, so unspeakably beneficial and blessed? How can you lift your foot to turn away when Christ so tenderly asks you to stay? How can you refuse when He bids you so remember His love, so to show forth His death, so to avow your hope, so to rejoice with your brethren? Why refuse such a Eucharist, such a commemoration of love and joy, such a sanctifying and assuring grace?

It is a simple observance, but the roots of ineffable consolations are in it. You may think that you can maintain your religious life and love without it. Possibly; but surely that is an ungracious reply to such

a request of yearning infinite love, to push back the proffered keepsake, saying, "My love can do without it." Rather should it be an eager joy to "do this" also.

May God give to us all that grace, of which all ordinances are only means, and after sitting down at this table on earth, grant us to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

[1881.]

## CHRIST'S SYMPATHY.

"For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."—HEB. ii. 18.

THE common things of life need the most constant ministry. Daily hunger needs daily food, and the homely meal is more to life than the festive banquet, the common provision than the luxuries of the wealthy. Hence we constantly recur to the central truths of the Gospel of Christ, to the forgiveness of sins, to the quickening of the new life, to the nurture of holy character, to the ministry to human sorrow, to the revelation of immortal life.

Sometimes we have to preach *about* Christianity, its truth, its moral beauty, its form, its authority; but our chief business is to preach Christianity itself, to demonstrate not the validity of the weapon, but its efficiency when practically applied. The commandment is exceeding broad, and has applications to the remotest interests and minutest graces of human life, the ruling of a temper, the gladness of a feeling; but from these again we return to the grave and constant vitalities of the religious life. Sins and sorrows do not cease for us. We need daily forgiveness and daily grace. Men are suffering, and need comforting, and must be constantly brought to the saving, helping Christ, our very present help in time of need. It is not novelty that the hungry man craves, but common bread; it is not the last new thing in medical science for which the sick man seeks the physician, but the remedy that will effect a



cure. What it lacks in novelty is more than compensated by its practical efficacy ; so he who provides the spiritual food or medicine of hungry or diseased souls must mainly think of daily conditions and chronic wants, and bring to each his portion of meat in due season.

So we come again to this great mission of Christ the Comforter, the *Christus Consolator*, the eager recognition of eighteen centuries of Christian teaching, and of repeated necessities in individual lives ; to which all sorrowful men listen still with as much avidity as if it were for the first time enunciated. Let us again look at this divine provision for our human sorrows, and try to urge it. It would be strange were there not some anxious, some sorrowful hearts in a congregation like this. It will be much if even one troubled soul goes away feeling that there is "consolation in Christ." Blessed is the man who passing through the valley of Baca—the valley of weeping—makes it a fountain of blessing.

It is an assertion of the great moral purpose of our Lord's suffering life. It was to give Him power, not of Divine pity, but of human sympathy. It was the Divine taking a form that enables us easily to realise this. Both comfort and faith depend very much upon our own easy realisations. It is not easy to realise the love and pity of pure Deity ; of a Being purely spiritual, august, perfect, infinitely remote from the conditions of our actual life. We can think of it only as a good-natured condescension, a distant Almightiness turning aside for a moment to help. There is comfort in this, but not all the comfort we crave. We need sympathy as well as help—the sympathy that may not lift the actual burden, but that cheers and strengthens the spirit to bear it. Often sympathy has no other power, and yet it is very precious. It is a word of very tender meaning. It implies suffering with a man, not helping him in the muscular

sense of the term, but making him feel that we feel with him in the pity and sorrow of our soul. Sympathy is more than help; the noblest souls would sooner have helpless sympathy than unsympathising help. And to enable us to feel sympathy, the sympathiser must have suffered. It needs experience to engender it, until in advanced life men become very pitiful and tender. Christ was in this way made perfect through suffering; this was the purpose of His incarnation, of His sorrowful human experiences of temptation and pain. We can through the incarnation of Christ realise the Divine, feel the love and pity of God, and trust His help much more easily than when we think of pure Deity.

A thousand problems, of course, start up—metaphysical, economical, moral. Can a Divine being suffer? How can the human in Christ suffer apart from the Divine?

May we not say that all love—and therefore God's love—is power of sympathy? It is not essential to sympathy that the same exact experiences should be endured. We can sympathise very really with calamities and sorrows that have never befallen ourselves. Imagination does its part in individualising suffering. We know what it is to suffer generally, and love gives us divinations of the special sufferings of others. Can the Divine heart suffer? May we answer the question by another? If it could not, could it truly love those who have to suffer? God is not a marble perfection, a passive quiescence, an absorbed selfishness. Love in God is what love is in us—a quick affection and sympathy. If He did not sorrow when we suffered He would be anything but perfect. Do not let us be afraid to conceive of quick sympathetic emotion in the heart of the great loving Father; He sorrows over our sins and sufferings. It is part of His supreme blessedness that He does. Even the metaphysics need not trouble us; a

perfect God can so suffer in our suffering because He is perfect. Assuredly the incarnate Christ can ; and I think there is no incongruity between His suffering humanity and the sympathising divinity which it enshrined. He was tempted in every way in which human nature can be tempted, His purity and fidelity put to every test.

In itself, as God intended and made it, human nature is a holy thing—perfectly, immaculately pure. We know it only as tainted and corrupted with strong inclinations to moral evil—selfish, sensuous, disobedient. Even if we were not taught that this is a fallen, a disordered, a diseased condition, we should naturally so conclude. It would be a moral incongruity to conceive of moral imperfection as a creation of God. Reason and common sense are on the side of the Scripture doctrine of the Fall.

The teaching concerning Christ—the second man—is equally reasonable. If the incarnation be a truth at all, clearly the human nature which the Divine Christ took upon Him was not ordinary, tainted, fallen human nature. Every instinct would be offended by such a supposition. We are compelled to recognise a pure type of human nature free from all stain or tendency to sin. This is the theory of the miracle of the incarnation, and without miracle the incarnation could not be at all ; the one difference, and the only difference, between Christ and ordinary men is this.

But there is in perfect holiness no exemption from trial, from temptation, from tests of obedience and fidelity, from positive solicitations to evil. He was tempted in all points as we are ; only He did not, as we, sin in His sympathies with the temptation, in His yieldings to it. The Prince of this world, when he came, found nothing in Him.

A moral being, however, is tested and tempted according to the sympathies of his own character.



Temptation is possible only where there is susceptibility. Eve was tempted according to her susceptibility ; so were the angels who fell.

There are some temptations that are possible only to an evil nature. A gin-shop is no temptation to a well-regulated moral nature. A drunkard cannot pass it ; his depraved appetite craves it, as by a fascination he is drawn into it. Perhaps there is no moral nature that is not insensible to some form of temptation. Our Lord's temptations were only such as could appeal to a pure human nature. He could not be tempted as the drunkard, or licentious, or selfish man is tempted. He could not be tempted as man is tempted whose conscience is depraved, whose moral feeling is corrupted. He was without sin.

There are natural appetites and desires of pure human nature as well as depraved appetites and passions of sinful human nature ; and through these He could be tempted. He could feel hunger, and was tempted by unlawful ways to satisfy it. He could feel pain, and therefore could be tempted to evade it or to murmur at it. All the suffering conditions of His life would urge evasion. Why should He be poor ? Why should He so weary Himself in toiling for ungrateful men ? Why should He drink so bitter a cup, endure so cruel a cross ? If He prayed that it might pass, would not His human feeling be urged to refuse it ?

He desired the triumph of His mission ; He was tempted to sensational means of securing popularity. The people wished to make Him a king. Why should not the natural ambition be gratified ? The sinless appetites of the flesh, the lawful desires of the mind, might all be urged to indulgence ; and in this way He was tried ; not only tested as to His purity and fidelity, but positively solicited by the evil one to wrong gratification. He could so be tempted because He had these natural human susceptibilities and



feelings. There was no sin in them, as there is in depraved appetites and passions. All moral natures can be assailed, appealed to, whether they will do right or not; but they may refuse every gratification that is wrong.

The Divine Lord did this; whatever His human craving for food, or ease, or success, He instantly repelled every suggestion of wrong methods. No such suggestion could spring up in His pure soul; but it could be suggested from without. And the suggestion was met by the strong instinct of holiness, of right, of love, of obedience—"Get thee behind me, Satan."

The sin lies not in evil solicitation, but in sympathy with the solicitation, in the wish that it might be yielded to, that the gratification were possible. We do not conquer temptation when we merely refuse to yield to it, when some urging of conscience, some fear of consequences, some sense of stern law restrains us. A man may not dare to do, and yet may wish that he might do. A man conquers temptation only when his very desire repels it, when his whole nature rises up against its wrong, when the sense of law is lost in strong moral feeling, and he would not do it if he might. This was our Lord's victory; His entire soul was antagonistic to wrong. The tempter had nothing in Him.

It follows from this that a moral nature suffers from temptation in proportion as it is pure and perfect. It is not the mere temptation that causes the suffering, but the moral refinements and sensitiveness of the nature that is tempted. It may abhor the suggestion, may be far removed from all fear of yielding to it, and yet from its very perfection suffer most intensely. In this way Christ suffered being tempted. His power of suffering from evil suggestion was infinitely greater than that of a man whose feeling is tainted by sinful sympathy; just

as some men are both physically, emotionally, and morally far more sensitive than other men. The greatest nature is capable of the greatest feeling; the purest nature endures the most from the suggestion of sin. The lower the scale of being, the lower the sensibility. The greatest soul has the greatest vibrations when it is touched. Some are cut to the quick by an unkind word, an unloving look; others are so pachydermatous that such things are scarcely noticed by them. There are men who could follow to the grave their nearest friend and not shed a tear; there are others who would wail in anguish.

All this applies to moral natures. The purest and most sensitive suffer most. The very thought of human sin—the sin of others, not His own—caused the agony of Gethsemane. Every moral feeling is stronger and more sensitive in God than in man; sin offends Him more. It is that abominable thing which He hates.

The same temptation has very different measures of intensity and pain, according to the nature to which it is addressed; the feeling in us becomes infinite in God. In this way Christ was perfected in sympathy; the things that He so exquisitely suffered from the temptation are a qualification for a power of sympathy in Him, so that in all solicitations to sin, in all sorrow and cares, in all pain and struggles, He feels the keenest interest, the tenderest sympathy.

It follows that the holier we ordinary men are, the more keenly we shall suffer from temptation; the more like Christ we are, the more will evil grieve us. His salvation is much more than the forgiveness of sins, it is a deliverance from the power of sin, help in resisting it, power in putting off the old man and his deeds: a process of spiritual quickening, culture, and refinement, bringing us to a state of feeling which shall repel evil suggestion by sheer intrinsic antipathy to it.

Even in enduring physical pain, human care, and disappointment and sorrow, the desertion of friends, the privations of life, He who had not where to lay His head suffered more than we can suffer. His very physical organism must have been finely strung. His intellectual and emotional nature, His social affections and human sensibilities, must have been in exquisite congruity with His spiritual perfection. Common trials would be far keener to Him than they are to us. Indeed, this is implied in the urgency to "consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." When the men of Nazareth would have cast Him from the precipice, when His disciples walked no more with Him because of His hard sayings, when Peter denied Him, when Judas betrayed Him, when they all forsook Him and fled, it was more than the sensitiveness of common men that was wounded—it was a soul, tender in its sensibilities even to anguish, silently enduring unsuspected pain. All this is full of comforting suggestion.

1. For instance, there is a great difference between the instinctive yearning of the flesh and the intelligent desire of the spirit, between the physical hunger that craves and the moral sense that controls the gratification of the craving. How often we confound them, and blame the suffering which the sense causes, as if it were a moral wrong of the soul. How often "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Such temptations Christ felt, and in such there is no sin.

2. Christ was tempted to seek the success of His mission by wrong means, and He refused. How this should assure us when good men in the name of religion ask us to do foolish or even wrong things. How often we do things that our judgment does not approve, through fear of being thought indifferent about the interests of Christ's kingdom. How often we are asked in the interests of religion to do something sensational, to cast ourselves down from the



pinnacle of the temple. It will gather a crowd, it will fill a chapel, it will secure a good collection, it will bring men to hear the Gospel. In the name of Christ do not do it. No end can justify unworthy means. God's kingdom does not need our folly or our falsehood. And yet the only way in which some men can be tempted is through their religious zeal. Money, pleasure, fame, sense cannot tempt them. The lurid lights of hell or of earth cannot even lead them astray; but lights from Heaven may: let Satan transform himself into an angel of light—lead them to a church or a revival meeting—and he may play with their moral rectitude almost any prank he likes. It is not the less a sin because it is a pinnacle of the temple to which he takes men. Men will strain their consciences in a church to accomplish religious ends, as they would never think of doing in the market for secular ends. There is but one rule for us in such temptation, simply and absolutely to refuse. The means must be as holy as the end. We shall not imitate Christ unless we refuse every means of doing religious work that is not righteous and fitting.

3. Human suffering is not the mere infliction of God's almighty power. Its reasons, its feelings enter very deeply into the Divine heart. It is not a hard stroke of wanton power. It is a going forth of God's fatherly heart. Our earthly fathers may chasten us as may seem good to them, the heavenly Father for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. It is a great assimilating process—His moral nature assimilating ours. We imperfectly interpret, we greatly wrong the Divine doing when we think that it has no compelling reason, that it might have been done without; and we impetuously pray that He would reverse or take it away: "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." True, perhaps; but what an unutterable loss had he not died. To have been spared the



sorrow of the death would have been to be deprived of the love and grace and glory of the resurrection. We see only the process, and it seems causeless and painful. God sees the issue, and it is infinitely glorious; it is the ordinance of His deepest moral feeling, of His intensest love: a working of His very heart.

Has not God most joy in His greatest pity, in seeking and saving him who is the most lost? He delighteth in mercy, and most in the farthest reaches of His mercy, just as a physician rejoices in his greatest cure, the philanthropist in his greatest rescue, the preacher in his greatest conversion. Is it not a necessary law of benevolence? Does not Christ express it when He says that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons? The sheep that was lost is a greater joy to Him than the whole flock.

4. What an assurance it is of the common nature of God and man that such sympathy is possible! If His nature were not like our nature, if we were not His offspring, His breath, children of His image, such sympathy could not be.

The incarnation is only the means of making it more palpable to us. The Christ, too, was a partaker of our nature, and in virtue of its common elements He can sympathise with us. Our poor, weary, sinful hearts can go to Him, and invoke His human, His sinless pity. If we are tempted of the devil, so was He; if we are hungry and weary, and wrung with pain, He likewise took part of the same. He knows them all with quick intuition and tender experience; He knows the heart of the tempted, suffering man.

So He yearns towards us in His saving purpose and work; for this cause came He into the world, that He, the strong Son of God, might be the consoler of sorrowful men. He seeks them that He may comfort them, as tender women go into hospitals to nurse

rough men, moved by the Divine sentiment, the gracious enthusiasm of humanity.

And since He knows all that we are and feel, there is no defect of sympathy through ignorance. He does not mistake us as Eli mistook Hannah. He has nothing to discover in us; our shame and sin and sorrow cannot hide itself from Him. From the first He has perfect knowledge of us. He accepts us as we are—accepts us to save and comfort us. Our suffering comes from various sources; from infirmity, from misfortune, from sin. Christ knows the suffering, although not the sin. He was familiar with hunger and poverty, misfortune and bereavement, anguish and death. The man of sorrows, men crowned Him its king. He knoweth our frame; we have no sorrow that His sorrows did not overpass.

“In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

“Wherefore let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

[1888.] .

## INFLUENCE.

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—MATT. v. 13—16.

THE metaphors by which our Lord sets forth the influence of the Christian disciple, the qualities of his life, and the way in which they operate in social life, are very striking.

"Ye are the salt of the earth," the qualifying, preserving, purifying influence of human society. The assumption is that the earth—the world of men—is in a state of spiritual corruption, with a characteristic tendency to become worse and worse. This we have seen is literally true. It needs salt, therefore—some powerful antiseptic element—to arrest and counteract the tendency to moral putrefaction. What salt is in physical processes, that Christianity is in moral processes.

So again, when speaking of individual life, our Lord says, "Have salt in yourselves," let Christian principles and sympathies arrest and eradicate the moral corruption of the personal character.

Here the idea is that Christian men are to be to society what Christian truth is to the individual heart. The life of God is as salt in the personal

disciple; the true disciple is as salt in the social life of men.

Salt had a large and significant place in the natural symbolism of ancient peoples. In eastern countries it is a scarce and precious condiment. The ideas associated with it were various and interesting, as readers of Plutarch will remember. It has, therefore, furnished the sacred writers with some of their most suggestive analogies. Hence, too, it was so important an element in Hebrew sacrifice. It was, as here used by our Lord, the symbol of moral vitality and purity, therefore pre-eminently of the purifying forces of Christianity. This symbol was derived from the specific qualities and uses of salt as an antiseptic.

It was also the ancient symbol of hospitality, because of its being so essential an ingredient of human food; hence also of friendship, brotherhood, fidelity. A covenant of salt was sacred and inviolable. To eat salt with an Arab is to the present day to secure the pledge of his friendship; hence it becomes the fitting symbol of the assuaging, healing, uniting influences of the religion whose watchword is "peace on earth and goodwill to men."

Salt, again, was the symbol of wisdom. Pliny calls the Greeks the salt of the nations, and the Apostle Paul urges us to let our speech be seasoned with salt that we may know how to answer every man. Like salt, wisdom is an antiseptic; it arrests and counteracts ignorance and error, and is a fitting symbol, therefore, of His teaching who is "the wisdom of God."

Salt was used in sacrifices to symbolise the incorruptness of that which expiated sin—"Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt"—and also to symbolise the sacredness, fidelity, and permanence of the covenant between God and the sacrificer; so that every item of this varied and expressive symbolism is a fitting and



suggestive representation of the religion of Jesus Christ.

By a slightly varied use of the symbol our Lord intimates its value as manure for land—"Salt is good, but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill." They who were the salt of the earth, therefore, were to fertilise "the field which is the world," and in which the good seed of the kingdom is sown, as manure fertilises the arable glebe, so that the sterile human soil shall bring forth richly fruits of righteousness.

The other metaphor carries a still larger meaning—it is at once more noble in idea and more comprehensive in reference. "Ye are the light of the world." If the one metaphor represent that fertilising agency, without which the very aliment of life would be wanting, the other represents the illumining and quickening power whereby ignorance and moral death are destroyed, and men are lifted to the utmost height of intellectual grandeur and spiritual life, even to the very knowledge and blessedness of God Himself. The light shines from heaven to earth; it is God's manifestation of Himself to the darkness and death of human souls. Light prefigures to us the two great ideas of knowledge and purity.

Both metaphors together furnish a very suggestive representation of the various forces which Christianity exerts in regenerating human society; the salt of the earth operating upon the cold, passive clod, counteracting its elements of corruption, and invigorating it with powers of life; and the light of the world making the very firmament of life luminous and filling its entire sphere with intelligence and warmth.

Both affirmations are startling and bold.

"Ye are the salt of the earth." They would quicken into life that which was dead, fertilise that

which was sterile, make that which was barren to be prolific in fruits of righteousness—they were to be charged with a truth and a life that would lift men to God.

“Ye are the light of the world”—a greater affirmation still. They would fill the moral firmament with the highest spiritual knowledge—make it resplendent with the purest glory. The influence of their light, like that of the sun, would be illimitable, all pervading, charged with illuminating and vitalising influence; wherever it came it would diffuse lustre and quicken life.

The two metaphors supplement and perfect each other, as life and light do. A man must be quickened to spiritual life to have the power of perceiving spiritual light—the more life there is in a man, the greater his power of receiving light; while the more light that he receives, the larger his vision of God, the stronger and purer and richer his life will be.

The two metaphors, again, suggest different types of religious character, different degrees of religious life, different forms of religious influence.

The salt works secretly, silently, slowly. Many men, true disciples of Christ, realise but a low degree of Christian life. They are good, but not very intelligent; right in heart, but narrow and prejudiced in their views. To be quickened to religious life is a great and blessed thing; but to have that life made luminous and wise and noble by intelligence, to understand the mind of God, the ways and purposes of God, as well as to feel His heart, is a thing still greater and more blessed. Paul ministers milk to them that are babes in Christ, he speaks wisdom among them that are perfect. To the one he is as salt, a quickening, purifying influence; to the other he is as light, an illuminating, fructifying power.

No true disciple of Christ will be contented with the lower condition of life, any more than a true man

is contented with mere animal conditions of being. "Leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, we go on to perfection."

The two types, however, do exist, and they demand corresponding treatment.

In our ragged churches, in heathen missions, we go to the ignorant and degraded. The agency is that of the salt, arresting the process of decay, preserving sweetness and wholesomeness. We appeal to men by stronger and more sensuous means—through the senses, or the lower emotions, or the coarser intelligence. We work upon fear and self-interest, and so bring men to Christ.

The appeal to cultured congregations is higher and more intellectual, more refined and subtle. We work upon their reason and nobler sentiments; we minister the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ.

This is simply saying that in applying the Gospel of Christ you must use means suitable to the culture and moral intelligence of those whom you would save. The appeal that would arrest and bring one man to Christ may have even a deterrent effect upon another man. The moral process is alike in all, the Divine Spirit is the common quickener, the spiritual truths of God are the common agency, but there are divers operations. In one the process is that of the salt—sensible contact, pungent applications—a kind of chemical conversion. In another the process is that of the light—a kind of spiritual revelation through the reason, the mental tastes, the moral feelings. Some are grossly unintellectual; scarcely any appeal to reason is possible. Some are inquiring and acquisitive; their reason must be convinced.

Some have their hearts broken as by a stroke, like the gaoler at Philippi; some have their hearts opened as by the morning sunbeam, like Lydia: some, like the men of Nineveh, will repent only when a Jonah goes to them with alarming preaching; some



are eager for knowledge, like the Ethiopian eunuch. To some, address must be poignant as salt, to others it must be gentle and insinuating as light. Paul does not preach to the barbarians at Lystra as he does to the philosophers at Athens; the Baptist comes with his message of repentance; the Christ with His invitation to rest. One man's preaching is specially adapted to convert, another to instruct and nurture him that is converted. Both are requisite—the salt in its pungency, the light in its penetrating gentleness.

As this injunction follows immediately upon the Beatitudes as a practical application of their teaching, it is evident that our Lord regards the moral qualities which he has specified and pronounced blessed as having this virtue. Spiritual poverty, a mourning sense of moral evil and meekness of heart, hunger for righteousness, mercifulness, purity, peacemaking, fidelity to Christ in persecution—these are the spiritual qualities which make up the true disciple of Christ and make him the salt of the earth and the light of the world. They define a distinctive character. They indicate wherein true spiritual power consists; not in dogmas or activities, but in essential qualities of heart; not in sacramental mystery, or consecrated priest, or legitimate church, but in inward spiritualities of soul. All who are thus spiritually good may enlighten and bless mankind. It is the prerogative of no church, or caste, or creed, it is the property of every true disciple of Christ. It follows therefore:—

1. That Christian men are the salt of the earth in virtue of their being in it. Pure men in the midst of impurity, men in broad and palpable contrast with the ungodly; their Christianity not merely received by them as a doctrine or about them as a profession, but within them as life and manifest as character, its principles embodied in living forms, in holy practice; quietly, unconsciously, yet potently exerting a subtle moral influence upon all who come within their reach.



2. They are the salt of the earth by their active assimilating power upon its corruptness. Even unconscious piety is aggressive. Purity in itself is an assault upon vice—a protest and rebuke. Every holy life restrains and transforms the unholy lives around it. Every pious man is a living witness for God. He testifies to his claims, demonstrates the reasonableness and blessedness of piety; he is an argument for religion and an example of it.

Actively he seeks to bring others under its influence, to make them holy as he is holy, happy as he is happy. He dissuades from sin, he incites to holiness, he labours and prays and sacrifices himself if by any means he may save some.

Nor can it be questioned that practically Christian men seek by their holy lives to enforce their principles. Make what allowance you will for the inconsistencies and even the hypocrisies of men, it still remains true that the morality of Christian life is higher than that of any other life. More is expected from it, more is found in it—more of sanctified feeling, more of holy grace, more of godly service, more of brotherly beneficence and self-sacrifice. Christian men may in their zeal strive ignorantly and unwisely, but they do strive to convert men from sin, to conform them to the holy character of Jesus Christ; they do labour and pray, and sacrifice property and time to redeem the world from sin.

The teaching of the second metaphor is precisely to the same effect. As lights of the world Christian men communicate to men their highest spiritual ideas, their supreme conceptions of purity. True or false, the world possesses no ideas so great as those of Christianity. Only this divine light of God can illumine the spiritual darkness of men. Enlightened themselves, Christian men are enlighteners of others. In relation to Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, they shine with a light derived from Him. It is the

necessary property of light to transmit its rays. Every object receiving light must reflect it, as the moon and the planets reflect the light of the sun.

It is therefore the necessary law as well as the duty of the Christian man to shine as a light in the world, to reflect and diffuse the light he has derived from Christ.

In whatever locality we may be, Christ expects us to disperse its darkness. In our families, our neighbourhoods, our country we are to be as lights "in a dark place." Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Christian men are not enlightened by Christ to retire into deserts, to be immured in cloisters, or even to indulge in the pious quietude of the house, or the rural seclusion of the country. Where the world is darkest they must carry their light. They may not even leave it to shine by its own lustre—they must place it where it will shine the most, live where they can shed the greatest enlightenment, set the most beneficial example, exercise the most gracious influence. Our Lord did not seek the seclusion of Nazareth, nor His Apostles the solitudes of Judæa; they sought the great centres of men—crowded cities—that they might affect the greatest numbers. How we forget this obligation in our plans of life, in our choice of a residence, in our yearnings for quiet. "Let your light so shine"—so place it, so keep its lustre unimpaired—"as that men may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

This is the practical application of the whole—the responsibility resting upon disciples of Christ that the character and influence of their religion shall in their hands have the utmost possible efficacy. If the dignity and moral beauty of Christian discipleship be great, equally great is its responsibility, and the peril and doom of unfaithfulness.

Our Lord mentions two forms of peril :—

The salt may lose its savour, the light may be deteriorated or placed where it does not shine ; that the former may do its work its vitality and pungency must be conserved. If it become stale and insipid, all its uses are lost. A man, that is, may lose the power and unction of his piety, the fervour and spirituality of his faith and love ; the influence of his Christian beliefs upon his practical life may become slight and imperceptible. His Christian activities may cease, his power of moral contagion may die out of him, so that he shall no longer be a savour of Christ in every place. He may, indeed, like trees in winter, still retain his Christian vitality, but practically it is dormant. It has lost the outbursting energy, the aggressive power of life.

Every church has members, every Christian man has acquaintances in this torpid condition. What Job calls the root of the matter may be in them, but it is as a root out of a dry ground. It gladdens with no vegetation, gratifies with no fragrance, enriches with no fruit. We do not say of such that they are not disciples, that the salt is not in them—only that it has lost its savour ; they are fit for no uses of the Christian life, they exert no practical influence, put no constraint upon evil, urge men with no importunity, hallow social life with no sanctity. To an onlooker it is impossible to distinguish them from the unspiritual.

In various degrees of decadence and power you see men thus losing the savour of their piety.

It would be difficult to note all the causes and indications of the process. When a man loses his religious fervour and moral earnestness he begins to take life in an easy, self-indulgent way. Selfish considerations determine his actions. His purposes are ruled by calculation as to what will be most advantageous or agreeable to himself. He surrenders himself



to a cold, eager worldliness. Religious work is irksome to him; he becomes niggardly in his gifts. By these sure indications his salt is losing its savour.

Perhaps he lives for years in the church and does no recognised service; for years in a neighbourhood, and does no religious good to a single individual soul. So that were he to give his account to God he could instance no one whom he has benefited. Surely the savour is well-nigh gone. Christ pronounces such "good for nothing." Salt is valuable only as salt. It has no other uses. Some things may fail of one purpose and fulfil another. Salt losing its saltiness falls into unmitigated worthlessness, not fit even for the dunghill, only to be cast out as refuse. An unspiritual man is fit for no religious uses. Worse than useless, he becomes a spiritual incumbrance and nuisance. Filling his place in the church assembly, he is cold as the stone beneath his feet, barren as the pillar against which he leans. Without enthusiasm or sympathy, he is a cold critic and obstructive in all church councils, bearing a Christian name, but without a Christian heart; subscribing a Christian creed, but faithless in Christian life: not so much a temple of piety as an urn containing its ashes, over which angels bend and weep.

And it is *despicable*. "Cast out and trodden under foot of men." There is nothing that men despise more than inconsistent life and selfish compromise. Uncompromising piety they will honour; they feel a kind of respect for open, reckless godlessness; but for truckling meanness, for canting hypocrisy that would serve both God and mammon, that would pose for a saint in the Church and a worldling in the world, they feel an unmitigated scorn.

The loss is irrevocable. "Wherewith shall it be salted?" There is no salt for salt. Salt may correct unsavoury meat, but there is nothing to correct



unsavoury salt. The best things are capable of the worst corruption. A Christian man who has lost his piety is commonly worse than the man who never had piety to lose, the Pharisee than the Publican. If the conservators of the world are unfaithful, who is there to save it? Who shall keep the keeper?

It is a question for each of us. Am I preserving the saltiness of my Christian character and exerting a holy influence upon my family, my social circle, my neighbourhood, the world? Whatever the power of truth over my personal heart, has its power been exerted upon others? Am I purifying the world, or is the world corrupting me? Is the salt giving its properties to the flesh, or the flesh to the salt? Am I making society more spiritual, or is society making me more carnal? Is my savour of heaven or of earth? Do I bless the world with spiritual healing, or curse it with insipidity? Does it honour me for my usefulness, or tread me under foot as barren? Am I a savour of life unto life or of death unto death?

How are those nearest me affected by me? Are they becoming more thoughtful, earnest, and holy, or growing in indifference and unspirituality? Are my children, my servants, my friends, the better for my influence or the worse?—seasoned by the pungency of the salt, or has the salt lost its savour?

Does my light shine; am I myself illumined; not merely an instructed theologian, but a luminous saint, a man irradiated with the light of the life of God? A man of manifest penitence, faith, holiness, love? You cannot be a mere light-bearer, you must yourself be light. “Among whom ye shine as lights in the world,” living epistles of Christ, “known and read of all men.”

If not a converted man, you are doing nothing to enlighten others; you shed your darkness upon them, increase the density and noxiousness of the moral atmosphere, make it a darkness that may be felt.

Keep the lustre of your life unimpaired, feed the lamp of your life with the oil of heavenly grace, keep it trimmed with the careful discipline of life. Let no impure passion, no subtle selfishness, deteriorate it.

Let it shine so as to be seen. Let the flame of piety be distinct, palpable, unmistakable. You are enlightened not for yourselves only, but for others.

“Heaven doth with us as we with torches do ;  
Not light them for themselves : for if our virtues  
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike  
As if we had them not.”

Your place in the world is where there is the most darkness, where your light may shine with the greatest effect. Your care is demanded for the surroundings of your religious life, that no waywardness, no eccentricities of character, no seeming inconsistencies may dim the perception of your piety. Men may see only a distorted or discoloured piety, because you do not avoid the very appearance of evil. It is not enough to be harmless; you must be blameless, and without rebuke. Many a man wastes half the influence of his piety by sheer follies—foolish speech, reckless actions. The light shines, but it shines ineffectually.

If we may not parade our good doing, neither may we conceal it. Let it shine so as to glorify our Father who is in heaven. Only this as our supreme motive can be our sure guide of life. “Holding forth the word of life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world,” a light to glorify not ourselves, but “our Father who is in heaven.”

[1883.]

RELIGIOUS SOLUTION OF SCEPTICAL  
THOUGHTS.

"Nevertheless I am continually with thee : thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."—PSALM lxxiii. 23—26.

THIS is a strange conclusion to a dark mood of scepticism. It is like the rejoicing of an exhausted warrior after a fierce battle. It is like rest after sore temptation, when angels come and minister to us. It is as light in a dark place, deliverance out of a sore strait.

The Psalm is the outcry of a troubled and militant soul. The mystery of life is very great, its conflict is very sore. The singer felt as if he, a good man, had been very badly treated ; as if piety and virtue counted for nothing, as if He who governed the world made no moral distinctions. "Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency."

Nay, looking merely at external things, it almost seemed as if it were better to do wrong than right, better not to be restrained by moral scruples. Wicked men have manifestly the best of it ; they prosper because of the unscrupulousness of their wickedness, while good men suffer from the restraints of their righteousness. It seemed a sadly confused world, a world all a muddle ; there seemed no moral principles in its rule.



Is it not one of the greatest of a good man's trials, one of the most terrible straits of a pious man's faith, to feel as if in a world that God does not care for, or does not govern righteously? Tossed as into a seething, bubbling cauldron of circumstance; driven hither and thither by lawless forces, no firm hand laying hold of him; buffeted by troubles; beaten off his feet, as it were, by the wind and the hail; whirled high into the air, and dashed down again to the ground—a helpless waif of life.

He, a good man, surely ought to be held firmly, to find a sure footing. God might, by a kind of natural retribution, let His tempests loose upon the wicked; but for wrong always to come right, for right always to find itself in the wrong, was a sore perplexity for a man's religious faith. It sorely tried Asaph. He was tempted, as Job was tempted, to "let go his integrity," to "curse God and die."

He describes this turmoil of his feeling in language of almost unrivalled dramatic power and pathos. One puts this Psalm with the Book of Job, or with Paul's description of his conflict with carnal passion.

But his sceptical mood has a sudden and strange solution. Light unexpectedly breaks in upon the pitchy darkness of his soul. There is no apparent process of reasoning, no elaborate demonstration of the righteousness and philosophy of Providence, as in the Book of Job. The solution of religious problems does not often come in this way. Intellectual processes do not often settle moral questions, any more than physical processes settle questions of reason. Spiritual problems demand spiritual solutions. It is a flash of spiritual light.

It is a sudden religious thought that resolves Asaph's difficulties, "Nevertheless I am continually with thee." The problem is brought to the test of religious principles and experience. Neither material



considerations, nor intellectual reasonings can solve it. Has religious principle any power? He will estimate the value of godless men's methods and gains, in their relationship to righteous principles and moral satisfactions.

"Until I went into the sanctuary of God," until I brought religious teachings and considerations to bear; "then understood I their end." Only spiritual truths can shed light upon the world's darkness; the problems of life can be solved only by spiritual realities. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things that he possesses—a truth that men are very slow to learn, but that every man's own consciousness abundantly proves.

There is the inner world of soul, as well as the outer world of sense; the domain of spiritual principles, affections, and satisfactions, as well as the domain of physical gratifications. What is the value of this wicked prosperity—the man himself being judge—as compared with the consciousness of noble character, the ineffable joys of pious feeling? When by his godless ways the man has gained his wealth and honours, gotten the *things* into his hand, what consciousness do they inspire? How far do they satisfy his complex and mysterious nature? How far do they realise his expectations from them? Is he as happy as he thought he would be? Can his heart rest in them? Do they assure his thought, his feeling, his anticipation of what shall come after he has done with them?

It was worth the sceptical distress, the doubt, the conflict, the anguish, so to have solved such a problem. What an outburst it is: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." It is as if his scepticism

had dammed up the religious feeling of his soul, blocked its channels of pious faith and expression, until it has gathered volume and strength, when all the barriers are broken down, and the flood spreads over his entire being. What a torrent of religious faith and passion it is!

However perplexing the problems, however plausible the doubts, the religious trust of his intuitive soul asserts itself. He will confide in the righteousness and benignity of his God; the instincts of his heart are true and strong. God is greater and better than anything that He does. He can understand his great Father Himself better than he can understand His doings. His error has been in trying to interpret God by His doings—nay, but he will interpret the doings by God. He has a thousand assurances of His rectitude and love, and he will believe Him to be right even in these apparent contradictions. Sooner or later they will come right, because He who does them is right.

This was Asaph's remedy for his scepticism—the loving trust of his heart shall correct the perplexed thought of his head. His religious experience shall determine his theology; his piety shall rule his faith, not his understanding. It is a great lesson for us all to learn.

Are not all our great religious problems solved in this way? Is not experiment the method of all science? The religious life can have no other method. There are many things that I can know only by doing them. I test light by seeing; I understand love by loving; I know life by living. So I know God and Christ and spiritual life by experience of them. I cannot demonstrate them by intellectual evidence or argument, any more than I can demonstrate life. I have no means of proving the being of a God, the incarnation and atonement of the Christ, the new life of the Holy Spirit.

Let me test them practically—receive the teaching, and embody it—try what it will do for my character, my life, my consciousness. I do not ask the astronomer to demonstrate the sun. I look upon its brightness—I see the fruits and the flowers which it quickens; so I know God by the moral light and beauty and fruitfulness with which He fills me. It is the vision of the spiritual life; that is to me the truest theology which produces in me the noblest life.

The Psalmist mentions three or four of his conclusions:—

I. That there is a providential government of the world, and that in His government of the world God has special regard for religious men.

This was the first reaction of his sceptical reasonings, the conclusion to which his first religious impulse led him: “Nevertheless I am still with thee.” It is the only possible conception of a Divine Providence. In all the complications of this wonderful world, in all its distresses, disruptions, and convulsions, I, the individual man, am never for a moment lost sight of.

What a conviction to be wrought into a man’s consciousness! What an assurance and inspiration for his daily life—the infinite Father never forgets me. Heaven is crowded with worshippers; earth is filled with sinning, struggling, clamouring, cursing, praying men, movements of nations, disruptions of society, battles and devastation: I, God’s solitary child, am never forgotten. He knows me, calls me by my name, watches over me, hears me, helps me, loves me. Infinite in knowledge and power, He can do this; infinite in love, He will. I am not merely one in a crowd, a grain in the great heap of humanity; I am a person, distinct and individual as in my own consciousness, before God. He knows the way I take; the hairs of my head are all numbered. It is not the mere poetry, it is the logic of omniscience.



It is a conception of God's providence full of inspiration, of assurance, strength and joy, infinitely more fruitful than any providence of pantheism, of fatalism, of materialism.

It is the only conclusion of religious recognition that the entire consciousness of a man can rest in. If He be the creator of the world, He governs it; His hand moves in it everywhere—none the less because of the order of its laws. We are all of us directing and modifying the actions of law—from the physician who heals disease, to the man who turns his foot from a stone in his path. It is not necessary for a personal providence that laws of Nature should be abrogated; it is enough that the operation of law should be directed. Can we think of the world as released from His control, rolled by His creating hand into space to find its godless destiny? Must not He who ordained its laws administer them? Must not He, as the necessity of His perfections, discriminate men and things? Can we think of an omniscience that does not know; a law or a motion that is self-sustained or self-directed; a love that does not bless?

It is the necessary conclusion of all intelligent theology, the necessary assurance of all true religion, that He is not far from any one of us; that in Him we live, and move, and have our being; that by the necessary law of His benevolence He is ever seeking, not His own arbitrary pleasure, but His creatures' good; that His power is the instrument of His wise love, seeking, through a thousand ways of discipline and development, our holiness and happiness.

There is a winter of the spiritual life when vital processes are latent—when neither fruit, nor foliage, nor sap is manifest; but the processes that shall issue in the harvest are not the less going on; and the great Husbandman patiently watches their development; the quickened seed looks forward to the



blossom; the blossom is in order to the fruit; and the entire culture of the plant is subordinate to the harvest. "Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

Comfort has but a small place in the great purposes of life. It is an ignoble seeking. Comfort! yes, if it comes as the sequence and issue of great duty and noble feeling; but the only worthy purpose of life is character, service, God-likeness—and every means is blessed that produces this.

As a man lives for high spiritual ends he understands this, and joyfully accepts God's curative medicine, God's perfecting discipline of life. His is the great Gospel of suffering, which is the revelation of Christianity—the Christian solution of the Old Testament problem, "Our light affliction . . . worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen"—the effect of the suffering being conditioned upon the looking, the aim, and the temper of the man—the attitude determines the process.

So God, the great Father, is personally dealing with each one of us. And then, besides the Providence without us, there is a spiritual world within. His Spirit speaks to our spirit; touches, quickens, sanctifies, blesses it. How? do you ask? Who may construe the things of the Spirit? Do we not touch each other's spirit—exert an influence by thoughts, by feelings, by mysterious sympathies and affinities? Can God be denied such access to human hearts? Does He not speak to us in His Word? Do we not speak to Him in prayer? He, the giver of life, quickens life in us. Who may prescribe limits to spiritual intercourse? We cannot even to one another impart the whole of ourselves, or the best of ourselves; there are unknown possibilities we never attain. What mother can speak her love to her

child? We are ever striving to say to the great Father more than we can say. God would fain impart to us more of Himself. A greater and more blessed communion with Him is possible than any soul has realised.

It would be a cold doctrine of God's personal presence that did not include this inward communion with Him, "setting God always before us;" the subtle, mystic, half unconscious sense of God in our daily life—God dwelling in us, we in Him.

This is the consciousness of every religious life, the meaning of all prayer, the home and rest of outcast, wearied hearts—"Oh, that I knew where I might find him!"

I do not, like Lear, wail to the winds; "my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." To tell me that I moan only as the wind moans; that my tears are shed only as the ocean foam is scattered; that for my yearnings after God there is no satisfaction; that all that is greatest and strongest within me is a self-delusion, a capacity that there is nothing to fill; that this living, throbbing soul of mine can find no response but the cold, lifeless, cruel laws of Nature, is to mock all that I am most conscious of—my affinities, my yearnings, my love. I must have a personal God, a Heavenly Father, to whom I can bring my want, my sorrow, my crying; whose bosom I can feel, of whose sympathy I am assured, whose help will not fail.

It is the first teaching of all religion. It was the first great truth that the dumb, yearning, religious heart of the Psalmist laid hold of: "I have set God always before me." Not only was God with him—he was with God; ever looking to Him and trusting in His love—"Nevertheless I am continually with thee."

II. Allied with this is the further recognition of God as the guide of the religious man's life.

Not, of course, by any external agency, save by

unrecognised orderings of His providence; but by quickenings of religious sensibility and grace, whereby we are made discerning and wise in the orderings of our spiritual life. The true wisdom of a man is not in the direction of an external hand, but in the guidance of an understanding heart. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go; I will guide thee with *mine eye*." It is a promise that can be fulfilled only to the watchful and the obedient, who are observant of indications of the Divine will, and are eagerly responsive to them. God's hand might lay hold of us when most unobservant, His words might arrest us when most careless; but direction by a glance is possible only when we are habitually observant, when our attitude is attentive, our uplooking constant. It is a delicacy of Divine method, a simple suggestiveness which is the necessary way of spiritual influence. All spiritual things solicit us gently, touch us delicately; they are whispers and hints, not rude, overmastering forces; He who cannot hear God's still small voice will not be guided at all. How many of the spiritual teachings of the Bible are conveyed to us in suggestions rather than in broad explicit statements. How little of explicit demonstration it contains. For the acceptance of doctrine, for obedience to commands, a docile, sympathetic heart is imperative—a heart that is of the truth, and responds to the faintest touch of truth, as the Æolian harp to the summer breeze. To be guided by demonstration or law is one thing; to be guided by the eye is another—this is possible only to sympathetic life. He will miss the most precious truths that the Bible yields, the most precious experiences of the religious life, who demands logical proof for all its spiritual teachings; they are illuminations rather than reasonings.

There are readings between the lines, intimations and possibilities, divinings of meaning, which logic



cannot touch—only the intuitions of a loving and docile heart. What a profound and wonderful philosophy of life it is. No man is so wise as the religious man. The spiritual man brought into harmony with all God's purposes, made susceptible to all spiritual influences, capable of responding to all God's methods, the controlling power of God perfectly harmonising with the inviolable freedom of men. How often He girds us when we do not know Him; chooses our inheritance when we think the choice our own. He guides us by qualifying us to guide ourselves—to aim at high purposes and to form right judgments.

How wisely He orders our circumstances, places us amid difficulties, exposes us to temptations, compels our struggle and resistance and judgment. The wise Father knows that we are educated best, not by being sequestered, but by being exposed. It is not the education of a man to seek monkish seclusion, to abjure use because of abuse. It is better to struggle with evil, even though sometimes we have the worst of it; therefore God exposes us to fierce temptations, makes us perfect through suffering, develops manly strength in us by strenuous exercises of it. The innocence of a child is one thing; the holiness of a man is another. Our inheritance is not the less chosen of God because it is an experience of conflict and suffering; it is no less the right way because we are disappointed in it. For this very reason God may choose it; the roughest way leads to the loftiest moral heights.

III. And finally, God Himself is recognised as the supreme good of life: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." God is more than His gifts—a sufficient good should all gifts fail. His gifts are more when He is recognised as their giver. No man so greatly enjoys the material good of life as the religious man does. Life in all its departments is more



to him than it is to any other man. "God visits him every morning, and tries him every moment."

And when the things of life can no longer be possessed—when heart and flesh fail, God is the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever: a trained and developed and perfected spiritual man, he enters into the joy of his Lord.

Is not this a wonderful philosophy of life, a wonderful interpretation of its great problems? Ay, you say, if it were but true—you only wish that it were true; but is not the wish a presumption of its truth? Can I, think you, imagine better things than God has ordained? Can I imagine greater satisfactions for these marvellous affections and faculties of mine than He has provided? Is man to be God's greatest failure? Has He endowed him so greatly only to disappoint him? Philosophy tells us that every faculty finds its functions; then man, surely, will not fail of his satisfactions.

So our Christian philosophy teaches us to turn away from mere outward material experience to inward spiritual processes; to estimate things, not in their carnal, but in their spiritual relations. Let the wicked enjoy his great prosperity. His very success may be God's most terrible retribution upon him; more than anything else, it may make him hard and unspiritual; he is filled with his own ways—bidding his soul eat, drink, and be merry. Would it not have been better for Dives had his torment begun a little sooner? Were the Master to pronounce a judgment upon him, he would say, "Thou fool."

Let the righteous be in great adversity if but his worldliness be purged out of him—his purity, and faith, and love be perfected; it will be good for him in the moral estimate of things that he has been afflicted.

God will guide us by His counsel, and afterwards receive us to glory; but it will be only through our

own spirituality and wisdom. In the domain of moral life there are things which God cannot do for us, He can only enable us to do; so we conquer circumstance by becoming greater than circumstance. "In the world ye shall have tribulation; in me ye shall have peace."

Whatever else may fail me, the Heavenly Father never can. He knows me by name, His providence is about me, His Spirit is within me—not as a general law merely, but as a personal care; not shining indiscriminately as the sun, knowing not whether it falls upon a flower or a stone, but shining as a loving intelligence, a special sympathy, apprehended by the discerning and sympathetic soul. My life needs a God, not one who sits upon a distant throne, ruling a multitude of subjects, but one who holds me by my right hand, walks by my side, and is my very present help in every time of need.

What a privilege of life this consciousness is! He would have me "without carefulness"—"Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you."

Trust in Him with a true heart; trust, and living you shall suffer no ill, and dying you shall feel no death.

## AN ORDINATION CHARGE.

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee.”—1 TIMOTHY iv. 16.

MY BELOVED BROTHER,—From the earliest ages of the Church these words have been consecrated to services like the present, their aptness and momentousness spontaneously suggesting them to everyone discharging such a duty as, at your request, I have to-day undertaken. A live coal from off the altar, laid upon the hearts of God’s consecrated servants, they have, probably, kindled the sacrifice of ministerial service more frequently than any other scripture, perhaps than all others combined; they seem to have been indited by the Holy Spirit for this especial use. My own ordination charge was founded upon them; they are themselves a charge; and I should abundantly justify to myself the service which I now undertake, could I hope to produce in your mind and heart to-day impressions, and purposes, and prayers, like those then produced in my own.

Assuredly, I shall not be unmindful of the admonition, “Thou, therefore, that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” but in addressing you upon the responsibilities of the Christian ministry I shall put myself in the foremost place, and endeavour to reach your conscience and heart through my own.

May the Holy Spirit enable all of us, whom He has counted faithful and put into the ministry, to place ourselves by your side, to recall our own ordination impressions and vows; so that, with you, we may now search our hearts, and pray our prayers, and



renew the dedication of body, soul, and spirit to Him "whose we are and whom we serve."

Hardly, however, can we feel as you feel; a first ordination to the ministry comes only once; we can hope only faintly to reproduce its impressions. To you this will be a day long to be remembered, a day to date from henceforth and for ever, a day from which incalculable results must flow. What sanctities gather round it; what prayers and purposes mark it; what memories will reproduce it; even through eternity it will be in your heart and your history, distinct and solemn and transcendent—a day of days, "the day of your showing to Israel."

Will you try, then, to realise the resemblance of your position to-day to that of Timothy;—a young minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, your ministry just commencing and about to shape for itself a character and a history? You will then be prepared to listen with docility, and even with awe, to the apostle's injunction that you "take heed" to it, that with all watchfulness and prayerfulness you set yourself to realise its great spiritual ends, "to save yourself and them that hear you."

I. First, then, the apostle enjoins you to take heed to the character of your ministry.

Two things make a minister of Jesus Christ—the man and his message, the "self" and "the doctrine." And in a ministry of spiritual things the character of the man is as momentous as that of his message. Not only will your ministry be what your labour makes it, but it will be what you yourself are. Your personal character is the basis of your official character; your life is the condition of your work. You are not a mere instrument for doing a mechanical thing. It is not the mere exercise of certain faculties of thought and speech, and official act, that is required of you. It is not a manipulated thing, a brief, a book, a ritual that you are to produce. You are an



“ambassador in Christ’s stead;” your work is to produce states of feeling in men’s hearts, conviction of the truth, and impressions of the goodness of the Gospel which you preach; that you may practically win men to the love and discipleship of the Saviour.

It is essential, therefore, that not only that which you speak is true and holy, but that you who speak it are true and holy also; for men will transfer to the message, even unconsciously, the impressions which they receive of the messenger.

It is not, therefore, concerning your talents, nor even concerning your message, but concerning yourself, that your first solicitude is to be felt. Therefore, it is that in giving you your charge as a minister, God first renews His charge to you as a man. He bids you take heed to your ministry by taking heed to yourself.

There are two classes of things about which you are to be solicitous. There are things pertaining to you as a Christian man, and there are things pertaining to you as a Christian minister.

1. In the first place, do not permit your work as a minister to hinder your piety as a man.

As a Christian *man*, and in order to your personal piety and salvation, you need to “Take heed to yourself.” You will not be saved as a minister, but as a man; “lest,” says the apostle, “. . . when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

How little men imagine the need of such solicitudes in a minister! Can it be necessary to urge any special care for personal piety upon one who, by the consecration of his office, is “a man of God”? Does not the office itself avouch and secure the character? Does not the work sanctify the life, and make the maintenance of personal piety an easy and unencumbered thing? Is not a minister’s life necessarily sequestered from evil and enshrined in good? How little they understand the human heart who

reason thus! In no sphere of life, perhaps, may piety be so easily and unconsciously lost—just because it is so taken for granted. Our form and habit of life presume devoutness, and maintain the seeming of it. And so our own vigilance may be lulled to sleep, and ministerial piety may be lost in the very routine of ministerial duty.

You, my brother, will doubtless have discovered, ere this, that if by the assumption of the ministerial office you have escaped one form of temptation, it has been only to encounter another, more perilous still, because more refined and subtle.

Other men study God's truth as food for the nutriment of their own spiritual life; you study it as a science for producing spiritual life in others. Theological study is your professional business. You live officially near to the most solemn things; they are the means and instruments of your work.

What, then, if your familiarity with them, as instruments, should lessen your sense of them as spiritual influences! What if, while you wield God's truth, so as that others tremble, you yourself are unmoved by it! What if you should call others to earnestness and holiness, and you yourself be trifling and unspiritual! What if you should lead the devotions of others, and your own heart be undevout! What if you should minister at others' death-beds, and be forgetful of your own! What if the very preacher of salvation should himself fail of it!

Have you not already discovered that the asylum which shuts some evils out, shuts others in; that it is possible, in studying the philosophy of spiritual life, to neglect its experience; for the theology of the head to supersede the religion of the heart; to neglect the tree of life in pursuit of the tree of knowledge; to be made the keeper of others' vineyards, and not to keep your own? May you not appeal to other men's consciences and leave your own untouched?

May you not lose the fervour and tenderness of your own piety in your busy solitudes about the piety of others? Oh, my brother, it is very much easier to care for other men's souls than for our own; to sustain an outward activity than an inward religiousness—that is, it is much easier to *do* than to *be*.

Take heed then to *yourself*, lest you come to live too much an official, outside life—a life of mechanical acts rather than of moral feelings. Remember that great *doing* really depends upon great *being*. Let our doing be but the fair intelligent product of our inward being, of our thought, our culture, our communion with God, and we cannot do too much. But everything that we *do* outwardly we ought first to *be* inwardly. God, that is, will not accept even the holiness that you may produce in others as a substitute for your own. You must give account of *yourself* to God. You may become as unspiritual in the ministry of spiritual as of secular things. You may so give yourself to public preaching and prayer as that your self-culture and private communion with God are neglected.

And the temptation is all the more perilous, inasmuch as the reason for it seems to excuse it. We might refuse to abridge our closet duties for any *secular* business, but religious occupation seems almost to justify it. Under any circumstances, the care of our own souls requires of us the exercise of the highest principle, and the most resolute determination. We are always too ready to substitute for it anything which may seem to be an equivalent. Spiritual solicitude for others does not demand the judicial severity, the self-discipline and penance, that self-culture involves. It is easier to preach a dozen sermons than to conduct one half-hour's serious examination of our own souls.

And yet, whatever hinders our self-culture, be it the work of the pulpit or the work of the market, is



essentially pernicious. To keep our personal soul is the first of all duties. If I lose my hold upon God with the one hand, it will not compensate me that I save men's souls with the other, "lest . . . when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Forgive me this urgency, my brother; I speak in the presence of an urgent peril, and from the consciousness of my own experience. "Keep thy heart with all diligence;" and whenever you detect in yourself the first disinclination to secret prayer, the first impatient feeling in sacred duties, the first substitution of that which is official for that which is personal, then be sure that you are in peril, and cry unto Him who can preserve you.

2. There are also things that pertain to you as a minister. If you are not to permit your work as a minister to hinder your piety as a man, neither may you permit your piety as a man to fall short of your work as a minister. For you are more than a "man of God;" you are a "minister of Jesus Christ," and your character must sustain your office, your piety be adequate to the functions that you discharge. It has not been always so. Even setting aside those who have presumed to take upon them an office for which they were consciously unfitted, and those who have guiltily permitted what was once a true and noble spiritual life to decline, have there not been periods in our Church history when the indispensableness of ministerial piety was timidly maintained, and when mere moral habits and intellectual aptitudes were the chief things required? Can we marvel at the sad entail of woe that this brought; that lowness of piety engendered laxity of sentiment—for it is the heart that is ever the true guardian of orthodoxy—and that the declension and apostasy of many followed? Many a Puritan church stands like a tombstone over a grave—a grave in which evangelical truth and life have been entombed. Many a holy place in which our



fathers worshipped still witnesses a worship without a mediator, the preaching of a cross upon which no atoning Saviour hangs, and of a resurrection which does *not* declare the Son of God with power.

Hardly, we trust, can the sin be repeated: the penitence of many generations has bewailed it; the jealousy of the present generation has very pardonably become almost morbid. And for me to-day to say to you, my brother, that the exercise of your ministry presupposes your piety, is, thank God, almost to utter a truism. The latter is the required and fundamental condition of the former. The first avowals of your novitiate were of personal godliness, and before these witnesses to-day, you have again professed repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

You have recalled old memories of household piety, of church consecration, of providential circumstance, of manifold grace, which have been listened to, as well as recited, with swelling hearts. What processes of Divine grace you have confessed, what emotions you have hinted. How deep and earnest the spiritual life that you have described; how prayerful your feeling, as, in the first solitudes of your ministerial purpose, you interrogated your spiritual life. We have "glorified God in you," as we have seen your own manifest conviction that this is the essential condition of your spiritual work, sanctifying by its presence, or invalidating by its absence, every other.

Still there may be need to remind you that ministerial sanctity must be not only maintained, but assiduously cultured, raised to a high tone, made a pervading power; and that, above all other things, it will determine your ministerial efficiency. And it may not be unnecessary to caution you against the subtle and insidious influences that are always operating to deteriorate it. With what emphatic and

solicitous reiteration does Paul urge these things upon Timothy, reminding him that in personal godliness he is to be an ensample to believers, an example to those who are examples to the world !

Ponder, then, my brother, the *official* importance of a high spiritual character. The very obviousness of it may diminish your sense of it. You may so take it for granted as practically to neglect it. Other men need piety as the essential condition of salvation; you need it, further, as the essential condition of your work. Not that God requires less of other men than He does of you ; but shortcoming in you would be more flagrant, incongruous, and injurious. Above all men, you need a piety that shall pervade and imbue your whole being—that shall be so paramount and controlling as manifestly to attemper your whole heart and life, your studies and your prayers, your teachings in the pulpit, and your ministerings as a pastor, your sanction of the joys of life, and your solacing of its sorrows—a piety that only communion with God can generate, and only entire consecration express. You are set apart not only to teach men godliness, but to stimulate them to its attainment ; and your sermons and prayers must live and burn, through the vital spirit that is in them, ere they will awaken the responsive sympathies that you solicit. You cannot separate your ministry from yourself—as you are, it *must* be. Far more are you than a professor of theological science ; far more than an ordinary believer, or a saint. You are chosen to serve at the altar of the church ; to be a “leader of the sacramental host of God’s elect ;” to be the spiritual guide and exemplar of multitudes of immortal souls. To you the Master commits, not the stewardship of wealth, or the government of empires—that were comparatively a light entrustment—but the keeping of souls, of souls for whom He died. You receive it from Him as your sole commission, your solemn

charge, that "you save yourself and those who hear you."

There is not one of us who does not feel how possible it is to commend a holiness that we do not cultivate; to point a path that we do not tread; to speak of the love, even of a Christ, with a cold heart to argue, even for the truth, in a spirit of unbelief; to speak of comforts which we ourselves do not feel; to yearn for success from other motives than the love of souls—"deceiving and being deceived." Our very expressions of humility may be the utterances of a proud spirit; our rebukes of negligence spring from a mortified vanity; our pastoral ministrations may have "respect of persons"; our faithful preaching be a courting of popular applause; yea, the very fruit of our labours be "a sacrifice to our own drag, and incense to our own net." And if we acquire facility in ministerial work, we may consecrate to indolence and selfishness the leisure that it gives.

Others will refer to us their doubts or their complicate experiences. What if we cannot deal with them without exposing our own spiritual ignorance! What if, to their deep disappointment, they find us "physicians of no value"! The topics of your ministry will relate to the various experiences of men's tempted, struggling, sinful life; their penitence, their hopes, their fears, their duties. Suppose that you lack the instinctive sympathies which true sanctity gives! Only the pure in heart see God: suppose you lack such power of spiritual perception, and the secrets of the most High be hidden from you! The great mysteries of godliness, which form the staple of an efficient ministry, are penetrated, not by a keen intellect, but by a sympathetic, prayerful heart. You will *know* only as you yourself *are*. "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." You will "grow in knowledge" as a spiritual teacher only as you "grow



in grace" as a spiritual man. Your preaching of the things of God must largely be a history of your experience of them. "I publish to my flock," says Baxter, "the distempers of my own soul."

Oh, my brother, realise the true character of the work that you have to do, and all injunctions will be superfluous. It will form a channel in your heart, into which every stream of thought, and feeling, and purpose will flow. You will guard with a godly jealousy the purities and refinements of spiritual character. Your face will shine before the people as you come down to them from the mount; they will "take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus." Your work will be to you a holy passion, a thing of prayerful solicitude and trembling awe. You will labour in the spirit of the Master's consecration, and sacrifice yourself in the spirit of the Master's passion. Your motto will be: "If by any means I may save some." Your feeling: "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus."

Forgive me, my brother, this importunity on this point. It includes all counsels needful on my part; it touches all impulses on yours.

3. It is only another form of the same injunction to say to you, in the next place, take heed to your *Ministerial Deportment*. And this respects:

*First*, your *conception* of your office. How do you conceive of its relation to the truth? Where does it rank? What are its prerogatives? How do you wish men to account of you? How do you account of yourself? Questions which have agitated the Church throughout its history, and which have divided attention, even with the truth itself. Nay, the truth has often been subordinated to them, for the office has been magnified above its functions. Just in proportion as the Church has become corrupt,



the truth has been subordinated to the man—not the man to the truth. Few more terrible histories have been written than that of priestcraft, with its struggles of unholy ambition, its tyrannies of successful intrigue and unscrupulous power. The bishop of souls, a lord of God's heritage; the servant of Christ, a ruler of nations, seating himself upon a throne, laying hold of the powers of both worlds, and "exalting himself above all that is called God, and worshipped;" a "mystery of iniquity" that began to work even before the inspired pen dropped from the failing hand of the seer, and while he could yet earnestly and beseechingly warn the churches against it; and which, in countless forms, is still working in all Churches. "Who," he vehemently asks, "Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?"

Theoretically, you repudiate all lordly claims and titles. "One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren." Your reply to all who ask concerning your office is, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

Your office, rightly conceived of, claims an authority that is Divine; but a wrong conception of it may lead you to contend for an authority that Christ has not given you, or to concede authority that it is unfaithfulness to Him to part with. As a pastor, you are to "feed the flock;" as a bishop, you are to "rule the church;" and of the members of the church, God requires that they obey you and "submit themselves."

But then, your authority is not an arbitrary thing; it is clearly defined and limited. It is restricted to the administration of Christ's laws, to the enforcement of Christ's truth. The submission that you may require is only "in things that are the Lord's."

With this limitation you will, I trust, "magnify your office," respect yourself as a minister of Christ, and cause others to respect you as such. While you

will avoid all foolish assumptions on the one hand, you will not, by any unworthy subserviency on the other, justify the reproach that they who "live to please must please to live." You will be faithful and fearless; you will honestly witness for God; you will not shun to "declare the whole counsel of God;" you will not permit the truth and sanctity of God's message to be disparaged in your hands. "Let no man despise thee." The surrender of your independence, the compromise of your fidelity, were the death-signal to your usefulness and peace.

To be a servant of Christ is enough for your highest ambition—your purest joys. "He that will be greatest amongst you, let him be the servant of all." The apostle had no higher glory than to subscribe himself "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ." As such you stand in the true apostolical succession. Add, my brother, one more to the countless instances, so often ignored, of ministers of Christ, free and fearless in the discharge of their duties, commending themselves to every man's conscience, enshrining themselves in every man's heart. Be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, and there will be no need of unseemly strife for church power. Be assured that your influence will be proportionate to your fidelity. Your place in the hearts of your people will be secured neither by unworthy subserviency, nor by official assertion, but "by pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned."

Remember, too, that your conscience is not the law of other men's consciences. You may not, as a religious instructor, overbear other men's personal convictions. In many things you can give only judgments—proffer only advice. Be careful not to confound conscience and expediency; some of the most troublesome men amongst us are men of excessive conscientiousness, men who make a morality

of everything, and who, by claiming a conscientious regard to things of mere expediency, really destroy morals. Do not, my brother, be afraid of either the existence or the expression of differing opinions; these must obtain where men are intelligent and true, and your respect for them will secure respect for your own.

*Secondly*, fill your soul with the *magnitude* of your office. While you take care not to exaggerate its official and social importance, it will be impossible for you to exaggerate its moral importance. What work that God gives a man to do on earth can for a moment be compared with it? You wield "the powers of the world to come." You minister truths that are transforming the world, its thoughts and its life, its literature and its laws, its heart and its social habits; truths that have quickened dead souls to life, and that have made saints of the world's reprobates. At any moment the words that you speak, made mighty through God, may transform the man who hears you; the man whom social laws and mere moral influences have failed to touch; over whom a mother has wept, and a father prayed in vain; around whom wife and children have clung in unavailing entreaty, and whom all considerations of interest and character have failed to constrain. You may transform a very child of the devil into a child of God; so that to-morrow he shall listen to you with penitent heart and hungry ears, prayer breaking from his lips, and tears rolling down his cheeks, the demon of sin cast out, and he sitting at the feet of the Saviour, "clothed, and in his right mind."

Oh, my brother, never for a moment forget that your preaching may save men; that it is intended to save men, and that, as you are faithful, God will make it effectual for saving men. Oh, how is this mighty Gospel wronged by those who minister



it; how its resources are limited; its agency hampered; its powers permitted to slumber. How rarely we make "full proof" of it; test it to the utmost; try how much it can do; sow as the husbandman sows; fight as the warrior fights; reason as the pleader reasons; expecting results, and watching for them.

*Thirdly*, such conception of your ministry will determine *your discharge of its various functions*. I will not enumerate them. The spirit of *duty* may well dispense with a catalogue of *duties*. I need not remind you how much wise care you will need to give to the conduct of worship, the teaching of Bible classes, the visitings of the pastor.

One thing only will I venture to specify, and it is this: that whatever else you may do, you will "take heed" to your *preaching*. Preaching is the great function, preaching is the great practical power of your ministry; "the power of God unto salvation."

Above all other moral agencies, oratory touches and sways human passions, and for *your* oratory you have the most potent of all themes. You may not be able to achieve great scholarship, to become an accomplished classic, a profound metaphysician, a learned philosopher—although the better the scholar, other things being equal, the more effective will be the preacher. With scarcely an exception, the greatest preachers have been great scholars. Luther, Calvin, Howe, Watts, Hall, Chalmers, were all accomplished men, eminently combining science and sanctity, the professor and the apostle, intellectual gifts with spiritual fervour. But if for any cause it should be with you an alternative, I beseech you, my brother, by all that is solemn in your office, by all that is precious in human souls, by all that is pitiful in Christian compassion, by the passion of Christ, by the love of the Spirit, by the great



purpose and yearning of the Father, cultivate that which will save men. Strive, with all your powers, to be an "able minister of the New Testament." Let every thought and purpose, every sympathy and effort—yea, your very life itself, be bound up with the doing of this. "Give thyself *wholly* to it,"—literally *be* in it. Let no temptations to literary ambition or to social enjoyment seduce you from it; let all your studies be pursued with a reference to it; let it be the passion of your undivided heart; fill the soul of every purpose with it—"determine to know nothing else amongst men." Men excel in no pursuit of life without enthusiasm, least of all in preaching. Let, then, effective preaching be your great ambition—your sermons the focus into which you bring all the rays of your thought, and scholarship, and feeling, to be enkindled by the Holy Spirit into a blaze of sacred eloquence. Make everything contribute to the wealth, lucidity, and power of your sermons. And preach sermons that shall be not the mere putting together of theological platitudes, or moral aphorisms, but that shall be a nurture of spiritual life, inclusive of all things, meddling with all interests, uniting all objects, concentrating all energies, sermons dealing not with metaphysical subtleties, but with the practical moralities that come home to the business and bosoms of the living, every-day men of this nineteenth century.

Your only possibility of eminent success is to choose your end, and to make everything contribute to it. And this, if an enthusiast, you will do. All men and all things, conversation and books, histories and travels, philosophies and fictions, newspapers and every-day experiences—you will compel all to contribute their wisdom and suggestion. And you will preach with singleness, enthusiasm, passion, and absorption. Be assured that over-preparation for preaching, if of the right kind, is an impossibility

Your danger is not in over-study, but in separating any study from this one supreme one.

Hence so many pitiful failures in our ministers; it is not the want of adequate talent, but of determined aim and adjusted culture—their utter lack of passionate earnestness. There is no fire burning within them; no zeal of the Lord among them. If they have purposed at all, they have purposed something else—either to be scholars, or writers, or thinkers, or eloquent discourses of religious philosophy; they have not, that is, purposed the great end of the orator—to carry his point. Be this, then, your end and passion; speak to men with the words of God burning on your lips. Magnify your preaching office; feel it to be a “grace given unto you;” watch over the sacred fire, and nurture it with holy prayers, and sympathies, and purposes. Whenever you preach it, if only in a cottage, preach your best; “seek out acceptable words,” and the most effective manner of uttering them; reverence human souls, and think how solemn a thing it is to come to them from God. You find them dead in trespasses and sins; speak to them words whereby they may be saved—words of yearning, burning sympathy; words of gracious Gospel, of holy, helpful, transforming truth.

II. And this reminds me that you are specially enjoined to take heed not only to yourself, but also to the *doctrine*—that is, you are not to mistake the thing to be preached. It is here designated “*the doctrine*,” the truth of Christ, the doctrine involved in Christ’s life and death, and revealed in Christ’s word; the doctrine exclusively, without additions of human supposition; the doctrine entirely, without any withholdment; the doctrine as Christ Himself has distributed and proportioned it, in all its wise and wonderful adaptations to men of different thoughts and different characters. “Teaching every man, warning

every man in all wisdom." Let no one escape your appeal, or evade your aim; let your ministry be, as it were, an anticipatory bar of judgment, to which every man must "give account." Let every heart feel your searching in turn; let the hypocrite feel that he can wear no disguise that God's truth cannot penetrate, and the unbeliever that he can never so harden his heart as that God cannot touch it; speak to the worldly as he brings hither the world in his heart, and to the undecided as he halts betwixt two opinions, to the penitent as he smites upon his breast, and to the feeble as he wearily struggles with his burdens. Let each be warned, and encouraged, and taught, "rightly dividing the word of truth."

Above all, my brother, *preach Christ*. Never forget your character as His ambassador, nor your message as the preacher of His cross. Let every reference of your preaching be to the living, personal Christ. In the strictest sense of the term, you are to "know nothing amongst men save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." In this, Christianity knows no change, is capable of no development; the things which Paul committed to Timothy are still to be "committed to faithful men." You have not a truth to discover, but a discovered truth to proclaim. You have simply to connect the Christ that Paul preached with all the varied forms of our modern life. The cross of Christ is a Gospel for universal humanity; the world can never outgrow it until it outgrows its sin.

Be not ashamed, then, of this Gospel of Christ. A more fatal invalidation could not befall humanity than reserve or incertitude here. Clear and undoubting faith is the essential condition of your success. Whatever your reverent sense of the mysteries of the Divine *counsels*, you are surely entitled to hold firmly by revealed *facts*, and to proclaim them decisively and authoritatively. Reverent diffidence,



modest inquiry, and well-discerned limitations, will commend themselves to all who are wise; but for God's ambassador to have only doubts to utter, is to turn the ministry into an impertinence.

Preach Christ, then, my brother; bear constant and decisive testimony to His death and resurrection; assured that there is "no other sacrifice for sin," "no other blood that cleanseth," that it is still "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." The truest philosophy is to preach the thing that men's necessities crave. When hungry souls ask you for bread, you may not give them stones.

And preach Christ *for Christ's sake*; not because the people will have it so, and because thereby you may secure the greatest following; but from a deep and pervading sense of His presence in Christianity. Paul gloried in His cross, and would glory in nothing else. It was the paramount topic of His ministry. Wherever he went he so paraded it as to make it a local spectacle, so that he could say to them of Galatia: "Before *your eyes* Jesus Christ is evidently set forth, crucified amongst you." So do you make every place a Calvary, where affection may weep, and carelessness tremble, and penitence pray, and infidelity smite upon its breast. Such a theme is in itself a power; a moral magnet, which the weakest may hold. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

III. And then this care for yourself and for the doctrine is to "*continue*." "Continue in them." Your moral and ministerial fitness are to be persistent and habitual. You may not permit your pious fervour to evaporate in to-day's emotions, nor your fidelity to be circumscribed by to-day's vows, nor your yearning desire for usefulness to expend itself in next Sabbath's sermons. Your effort is not to be spasmodic and fitful. To the primary power of piety and zeal you must add the cumulative influence of consistency and



perseverance. The fire upon the altar must be kept ever burning. Do not permit anything to divert you from your ministry or to lessen its efficiency. "It is not meet that you should leave the word of God and serve tables." "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth." Your work is your sufficient vocation. Can you, think you, ever so discharge it as to deem yourself at leisure for some supplementary occupation? "Give thyself wholly to it," and, if solicited to literary struggles or to political strifes, let your sufficient answer be, "I am doing a great work, and cannot come down."

Continue in it, even to the *end*; knowing no pause, keeping no Sabbath, augmenting your influence, and multiplying your talents. Be "faithful unto death, and you shall receive a crown of life."

"Ye who your Lord's commission bear,  
His way of mercy to prepare;  
Angels, he calls you—be your strife  
To lead on earth an angel's life.  
Think not of rest—though dreams be sweet,  
Start up and ply your heavenward feet;  
Is not God's oath upon your head,  
Ne'er to sink back on slothful bed?  
Never again your loins untie,  
Nor let your torches waste and die,  
Till, when the shadows darkest fall,  
Ye hear your Master's midnight call."

IV. And, *finally*, if competently and faithfully discharged, your ministry will realise its proper aims and issues. You will both "save yourself and them that hear you." The Master will graciously recognise the simplicity of your purpose, and the moral fitness of your methods, and will bless you with His saving grace.

This, therefore, you are to aim at and to expect. There is a sense in which you are not responsible for success, it is "God" who giveth the "increase."

But God forbid that you, my brother, should ever know the feeling that, because of this, can be contented *without* the increase.

Paul agonised for success, "travailed in soul" for it until Christ was formed in his converts, had "continual sorrow and heaviness of heart," "besought them day and night with tears," was "ready to be made a curse," if thereby they might be saved. Paul's Master and yours was made a curse for the salvation of the souls to which you preach. It was the "travail of his soul," the "joy that was set before him." Let it be also your travail and joy; for this do you "strive mightily," if "by any means you may save some." As Christ gives these souls into your charge, He commands you to save them.

And you know the appalling consequences if they are not saved. Oh, my brother, how will you feel and preach, as from Sabbath to Sabbath you ascend this sacred desk, and look round upon men and women who, you have but too much reason to fear, are *not* saved? In imagination you will see them passing to the bar of God, to give account to Him who shall judge both quick and dead. In a sense that is true of no other human being, the destiny of these particular souls depends upon you. Oh, how deeply, prayerfully, painfully solicitous will you be, so "to warn every man, and to teach every man in all wisdom, as that you may present every man faultless." The text warrants you to expect this. It speaks of their salvation as a natural consequence of your fidelity; there is no suggestion of the possibility of your being faithful, and they not saved. Exceptions there may be—men will perish under the most faithful ministry; but these are exceptions; the rule of God's blessing is that in proportion as you are faithful those who hear you will be saved.

Be faithful, then, my brother—faithful to the truth, faithful to yourself, faithful to Christ, faithful

to these souls, faithful even unto death ; and you will receive, not only the guerdon of other men, not only "a crown of life," not only the personal commendations of the Master : "Well done, good and faithful servant"—a wondrous recognition of our poor service—but your special service will result in living fruits and witnesses of your fidelity—in saved men, who will stand with you before God, and by their personal gratitude and love will crown even your joy in heaven. Next in fervency to their love for their Lord will be their love to you ; through eternity they will "call you blessed," and in its surprise and joy the rapture of your "Here am I" will be rivalled by that of the "Here are the children whom Thou hast given me."

My brother,

"I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and dead, at his appearing and his kingdom ; preach the word ; be instant in season, out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. . . . Watch thou in all things, . . . do the work of an evangelist ; make full proof of thy ministry."

O, man of God, fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

"I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear thou shalt receive a crown of glory."

"Consider what I say ; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."



## THE CHRIST, THE BOOK, AND THE CHURCH.

ADDRESS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL  
UNION.

[This address, though delivered so long ago as 1864, and upon subjects concerning which there has been, since then, much controversy, causing of necessity some changes of opinion, is inserted here as belonging to the years in which Dr. Allon was in the prime of life, and as an illustration of the position held in that day by the broader school of Congregational ministers.]

BELOVED AND HONOURED FATHERS AND BRETHREN,  
—In assuming the position to which I have been thus called, it were vain for me to deny some degree of even trembling anxiety. This, however, would be greater still were it not for the character of this assembly—an assembly of free men, whose conclusions are reached by honest independence of thought, and by frank and fearless debate. Were your chairman in any sense the arbiter of ecclesiastical matters, “such an one as Paul the aged” would alone be suitable for the office. Responsible only for my own individual opinions, and with no fear for the perfect brotherliness of our proceedings, I tremble only in the sense of personal prominence and speech among older and wiser brethren.

It would be ungrateful were I not also to confess a humble and thankful joy; I thank the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom I serve in the Gospel of His Son, for every indication of the confidence and love of my brethren; for by these only could any man be placed here. The mere place were a carnal and unworthy ambition, but the spontaneous



love that confers the place is, next to the favour of the Master, the highest and purest glorying of my life. In the deep sense of it I will try to be more thankful to Christ, and more useful to His Church, and to you.

My service, however, is a vicarious one. Our brother Mr. Harrison was first designated for this honour. Standing high in our esteem, and living warmly in our affections, we were prepared to greet him this morning with no ordinary expressions of our confidence and love. But God has otherwise determined; a severe and protracted sickness has disabled his ministry to us, and his still more important ministry to his own church. Our sympathies with him take another form than that which we had anticipated. Happily, however, they are relieved from fears which a few months ago would have weighted them with sadness; and we can rejoice that his disability is nearly removed. A shadow of great darkness had fallen upon him, but the brightness which made it a shadow was there also; and like a cloud from a landscape the shadow has passed away, and the blessed and rejoicing light of God again shines upon his home, his church, and us. "For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only but on us also, lest we should have sorrow upon sorrow."

When most unexpectedly requested to supply his lack of service, I did not confer "with flesh and blood;" I gave a more unhesitating assent than I should have done to a request in the ordinary course of things; I gave myself no time for even the fluttering hesitancy that the most confident might well feel. My brotherly sympathies, the exigencies of the circumstances, and my deference to whatever may be the wishes of my brethren constrained me—"therefore I came unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for." I will urge no plea of unworthiness,

however I may feel it ; I will utter no word of deprecation, however naturally such may rise to my lips ; I will make no avowals, however earnest and prayerful my purposes. I would rather try, so far as personal feelings must obtain, to realise the "perfect love which casteth out fear," and to feel myself "your servant for Jesus' sake ;" and as rapidly as possible I would hasten from all personal references to things broader and higher ; and in the simplicity and absorption of a common service to our Divine Master, forget everything but your brotherly love and His great glory. May He, the ever present Head of His Church, "whose we are, and whom we serve," be consciously and helpfully present with us all, in all our words and works !

If I gather into a single sentence the greetings customary on these occasions, it is because I can so take for granted our mutual love as to feel no necessity for their detailed affirmation. We meet in peace, no discord disturbs the harmony of our churches ; no angry purpose threatens the joy of our intercourse. The God of peace is with us. Our "churches have rest." The Lord grant that, "walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they may be multiplied." "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Brethren of other churches we joyfully recognise as fellow-servants with us, and "fellow-heirs of the grace of life ;" we bear a common name, "their Lord's and ours." Those present we gladly welcome to a full brotherly fellowship ; for all others we cherish brotherly sympathies and proffer brotherly prayers. "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."

Year by year our greetings change, and every year there are some that we cannot renew. The law of change—instructive and solemn—passes upon this,

as upon all periodic gatherings of men. The majority of faces upon which I look to-day are the familiar faces of last year and the year before ; but upon every one change has passed.

The great glaciers of the Alps fulfil their course like the history of human lives ; noiselessly and imperceptibly they slide from the place of their mountain birth to the valley in which they are dissolved ; and yet each year marks every part with change—the fresh snow consolidates into ice at their cradle—the various marks and fissures of progress attest their course—they melt and pass away at their terminus—the snowy child of the mountain having become a river of living waters to fructify the sunny plain. Similar to this is our course. Every year we look upon faces grown older and heads grown whiter. Even the most youthful advance by palpable stages ; the student of last year is a pastor this ; the fluttering hopes and fears of a first year's pastorate pass into calmer assurance ; the auguries of those who prayerfully laid hands on the young minister are more decisively fulfilled—he makes good his claim to confidence and honour, perhaps takes a junior place among the “elders who have obtained a good report.” He who but yesterday felt insignificant in this assembly, and as from an obscure distance looked with reverence to its fathers, is amazed to find himself presiding over its councils. With some the foot begins to falter, the familiar voice to tremble, and the consciousness dawns that for good or for evil the great work of life is done, and that only gleanings can be added to its garnered sheaves. Then the reverent head bows beneath its crown of glory ; it is the land of Beulah, where for a little time the pilgrims of life wait for the summons to cross the river. Again we come together, and the familiar presence is missed, and with a chastened sadness and a tender affection it is said, “he is not, for God hath taken him.”



Every year adds to our necrology, and the past has been no exception. Some—youthful soldiers—have fallen early in the field; others—men of maturer wisdom and strength—have been taken away in the midst of their days; some few, who after their task was done had lingered until busy workers had almost forgotten them, have gathered up their patriarchal feet, and another generation has become a tradition of the past. Our fathers—where are they? The prophets—do they live for ever?

Thus, while our assembly remains, its constituents change, and our heritage of honoured names, of precious memories, of fruitful work, grows richer. Each succeeding year we are “compassed” with a greater “cloud of witnesses.” Blessed be the great Head of the Church, for the fathers whom we reverence who are yet spared to us, and for younger brethren in whom we hope, whom He does not cease to give—a true and holy apostolical succession, as useful and as honoured, as qualified to “feed the flock of Christ,” and to “speak with the enemy in the gate”—as princely in liberality, and as simple in consecration, as the men of any previous generation. “Instead of the fathers come up the children, and they are princes in the land.”

It has been the custom for my predecessors in this office to speak concerning the position and aptitudes of our own denomination, and the part which it is taking, or ought to take, in the great work of evangelising the world. Naturally and necessarily, the excellences and defects of our own distinctive Church system have been the most prominent subjects of our annual thought and debate. The very able addresses of my immediate predecessor\* were very inclusive of these; they discussed most of the prominent matters of our interior church life, and with so much of suggestive wisdom and telling

\* The late Dr. Mellor, of Halifax.



point, that holy and thankful response was elicited from all our hearts.

May I venture on this occasion to depart from these precedents, to assume that our own denomination has for the present been sufficiently discriminated and discussed, although it will ever behove us jealously to guard its position, and to stimulate its agencies? But the denomination is not the Church, and every now and then there is need that the tribes forget their distinctive interests, and yield themselves to the inspirations of a common patriotism. At the present time, I think, the things that the most fill men's minds and hearts are not things distinctive and denominational, but things that vitally affect the whole Catholic Church of Christ. Will you permit me to occupy the rest of your time this morning with a few remarks concerning some of these?

No one can fail to see that the atmosphere of the Church is heavy and troubled; portentous clouds have gathered; some have broken in fierce tempests; and we hardly know yet what has been uprooted, and what has been rocked, only to take a more vigorous hold upon the soil.

The Christ, the Book, and the Church, with all that is vital in them, are now challenged. It is no longer a dispute about meanings, it is a demand for authority. It is no longer, "What does the Christ say?" but "Who is the Christ that He should speak at all? Is He really the Saviour and Master that He claims to be?" The Bible is no longer, as heretofore, asked simply concerning its meaning, but concerning its authorship and authority. By what right does it speak at all? Who authorised it to declare God's counsels and to give law to men's consciences? Is it in any distinctive sense an inspired and authoritative revelation from God, or is it simply a surpassing inspiration of ordinary sanctified humanity? These matters, moreover, are no longer, as hitherto, debated

with opponents without the Church, but with teachers within it. So long as the Church presented a consentaneous and compact array against foes without, or simply lacked the aid of her own indifferent and unspiritual members, she was but fighting the battle for which she was ordained; now her accepted and fundamental truths are assailed by some of the most able and earnest of her sons. It is "heresy," strictly so called, that challenges orthodoxy; like Saul the Pharisee, good men "verily think within themselves that they ought to do many things contrary" to the traditional authority of the Bible, "which things they do." It is no longer a Tom Paine necessitating the "Apology" of a Bishop Watson; the foes of the Bible are "those of its own household." And the supreme judicature declares that within the same ecclesiastical enclosure one party must recognise, as fellow members and authorised ministers, others who deny what, to say the least, they themselves deem essential to the Divine authority of the Bible. The civil authority is not only supreme over the ecclesiastical in the determination of doctrine, but it gives its legal sanction to that which it does not deny to be theological heresy.

This greatly adds to the gravity of the crisis. While the personal excellences and official position of many who thus teach error are melancholy proofs of the practical inefficiency of creeds and establishments to secure the orthodoxy even of their own members, they are a great vantage-ground for those with whom we have to contend. Who can fail to feel how much the controversy would be relieved were the issue simply one of Scriptural truth—were there no questions of civil law, or official prerogative, or authoritative creeds complicated with it?

If ever the advantages of our own simple Church system were manifest it is surely now. Were one of our bishops to fall into heresy, save as he might be

able to produce convictions in others it would begin and end with himself. No legal decision would compel the toleration of his heresy in his own communion; recognition would be refused him, and there an end. Surely men will see ere long that a system which places law above truth, and which imposes upon both churches and ministers such incongruous and humiliating disabilities, can be neither scriptural nor expedient.

Let me very emphatically say that questions like these vitally concern us; they have, therefore, imperative claims upon us. The Church that, when such matters were in debate, either remained indifferent, or purposely stood aloof, would fatally isolate itself, manifest a selfish sectarianism, and guiltily betray the entrustment of the Master. It was a maxim of Socrates that "in times of danger all good men should take sides." The curse fell upon Meroz simply because she stood aloof. It is impossible for more momentous issues to be imperilled. Upon what the Christ really is—upon what the Bible really is—upon what the Church really is—everything vital in Christianity depends. All wise men shrink from controversy; where the spirit of contention is, the Church is grievously vexed with a devil, and until it is cast out she can do no healthy work. But sometimes controversy may be the first and most pressing of her duties. The greatest evil that can afflict a land is war; but to wage war may sometimes be the highest and holiest patriotism. He who morbidly or passionately exalts into the domain of controversy things of mere expediency, and by fierce, untiring debate distracts the Church, sins against "unity, peace, and concord." But equally guilty is he who permits things of vital principle to be lowered to the sphere of mere expediency, and who, for the sake of an unfaithful peace, refuses to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." In its effeminacy, in its damaged conscience,



in its unholy compromises, peace may be more iniquitous and disastrous than war.

And yet in all Churches there are men whom moral cowardice, or mistaken conceptions of duty, hinder from taking part in the settlement of great questions; and who gladly leave to others the responsibility of maintaining the truth. They are not unfaithful to their convictions, but they are unfaithful to the truth, concerning their duty to which their convictions are mistaken. Nobly absorbed, perhaps, in spiritual work—in preaching, in pastoral duties, in various efforts to save men's souls—they refuse both to examine their own ecclesiastical position and to defend the theological truths upon which the spiritual power of all Churches must depend. They fear, perhaps, lest their own loosely-formed convictions should be disturbed, or their practical spiritual work be hindered. To every Sanballat who challenges them they reply, "We are doing a great work, so that we cannot come down"—the wisest of all replies so long as the enemy remains below in the "plain of Ono," but what if he has climbed to the very walls of the Holy City? What if he assaults the builders on its scaffold—what if he is tampering with its watchmen, and raising an insurrection in its streets? To refuse to fight then were a cowardly infidelity to Christ, which even the most pious occupation could not justify. It is as if the harvestman were to persist in the ingathering of his sheaves, regardless of the enemy who had landed upon his coasts. It may be a duty to sacrifice even a spiritual harvest in order to defend the territory upon which all spiritual harvests are to be produced.

Wise workers for Christ, like Christ Himself, will let duties be dictated by circumstances. Sometimes it may be a duty to labour in the city, and sometimes to retire into the desert—sometimes to preach to the multitude, and sometimes to dispute with the



Pharisee and the Sadducee. Ours is not yet the enviable condition in which we can work without fighting. The flocks of the Church do not yet pasture round dismantled and grass-grown cannon. As with the old Jews, "the walls of the city are built in troublous times," and the builders stand upon the scaffold, "every one with one of his hands labouring in the work, and with the other holding a weapon." Would that there were no Samaritans to contend against. How pleasant then would it be to build! How rapidly the work of conversion would advance! But God appoints it otherwise, and we may not refuse His conditions of service. No man is permitted so to do peaceful work as to be exempted from rough conflicts. Nor, in the long run, will any man attain to great nobility, reap great spiritual harvests or win the Master's highest commendation, who is unfaithful to the claims of great principles.

Upon the question of the Christ—His character and claims, the whole of Christianity rests. Upon our conceptions of His person and work, all Christian doctrine, and all Christian heresy depend. All Christian "truth is in Jesus." They who worship him as the incarnate God, they who, through His atoning death, seek reconciliation with God, necessarily differ vitally from those who regard Him as merely a perfect man, and as dying merely a martyr's death. Nothing surely is more fundamental in a religion than the object of worship, and the way in which the sinful are restored to God. So long as these are held in common, agreement is fundamental, and other differences are but accidents; but these denied, all that is distinctive in Christianity is denied only a common morality is recognised.

It is simply, therefore, delusive and false to speak of the common Christianity of men who thus differ. "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit

of anti-Christ whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." It is not upon any will or assertion of ours that this rests, it is an essential antagonism of things; Christianity, regardless of accidental diversities, is necessarily intolerant of all who deny its fundamentals.

And yet these are the questions concerning the Christ which are debated just now. He whom we have worshipped as God is declared to be less than a mere good man. In the great cause between Christ and the Pharisees, the verdict on *one* count is given in favour of the Pharisees, "he *was* a deceiver of the people." With His disciples at Bethany He conspired to put a living man into a tomb, that his emergence therefrom might pass for a miraculous resurrection. The cross, which our penitence has clasped, and up to which the streaming eye of our faith has dared to look, is but the martyr's death-tree of a handsome and amiable Jewish shepherd, whose popularity had deteriorated his noble moral character. We may not, therefore, render it a higher homage than to wreath it with the garlands of a human sympathy, and of a poetic sentiment. Moved by the divine power of love, and under the influence of a hallucination, Mary of Magdala "gave to the world a resuscitated God;" so that for two thousand years Christendom has believed, and worshipped, and apologists have striven, and missionaries have toiled, and martyrs have shed their blood for—a delusion and a lie.

To this the controversy concerning the Christ has come! This is the apotheosis of infidelity! This is the utmost revelation of the spiritual faculty! It provokes our indignant resentment of its impertinence, but it wonderfully reassures us by its folly. When argument thus degenerates into absurdity and impossibility a cause is lost. We are not, therefore, troubled concerning the Christ.

The signal failures of rationalism to construct a theory of the Christ, properly historic, but neither divine nor supernatural, and that shall account for all the phenomena of the Gospels, have well-nigh exhausted the controversy. The field in which the Divine Master walks and is worshipped by His disciples is well-nigh cleared of gainsayers. Strauss and Renan simply prove that counter-theories are exhausted.

Even the sober and reverent theory of English Unitarianism makes no impression upon our religious and social life. It continues traditionally, but it has no living assimilating power; and when now and then, under the relentless exigencies of logic, some venturesome writer impugns the perfect human sanctity of the Christ, he excites only a passionate resentment or an apologetic pity. It is manifest that he is arguing from *a priori* principles rather than from the constraint of resistless evidence.

The perfect holiness of Jesus is the world's one sacred thing, that it has enshrined in its heart of hearts—its one bright star of hope amid the darkness and tempest of sin—its one ideal of conceivable perfection amid the fragments of God's broken image—its one calm and faultless life amid those who madly sin or weakly struggle—its one redeeming thought and hope amid the wrong and ruin, the degradation and woe, that almost compel our despair of humanity, and our denial of God. Men's religious sensibilities cling to Him, their spiritual intuitions confess Him. And when their own logic would constrain them to say, "Give glory to God, for we know that this man is a sinner;" they revolt from logic, and incongruously take refuge in the inexplicable.

The "*Leben Jesu*" of Dr. Strauss, which a little more than a quarter of a century ago startled Christendom by its plausible theory of the Christ, is not only almost forgotten, but it has been abjured by



its author. With great learning and ingenuity it portrayed a merely human Christ, transcendent in goodness, but exalted to a Divinity only by the legends of his ignorant and credulous fellows—which in the course of the first two centuries shaped themselves into the four Gospels. But this theory laboured under a capital defect. Reducing the Christ to a mere man, it left unexplained the universal belief that He was a God. It made the effect greater than the cause. It was compelled to confess a supernatural Christianity, while it denied a supernatural Christ. The precious fruit is acknowledged, but the living vine that produced it is denied. And it is not one of the least of the triumphs of modern scholarship, that it has made this theory of the gradual growth of legends untenable, by triumphantly demonstrating that all the four Gospels belong to the first century; so that in a new edition of the "*Leben Jesu*" just published Strauss himself confesses its untenableness, and charges the Evangelists with wilful fraud.

And now comes M. Renan's new and still more preposterous theory, already on all hands confessed to be the most signal of the failures of Rationalism. Few books of modern times have obtained so great a notoriety. It is the one book of this generation which has aroused the whole Christian world. This, however, I venture to think, is an accident of the man, rather than an excitement about his theme. M. Renan's genius—his reputation as a Semitic scholar, the richness of his conceptions, the romance of his sentiment, the felicity and splendour of his style, his marvellous power of reproductive imagination—of re-peopleing the scenes of history—of revivifying the incidents and circumstances of personal life—and of surrounding it with local accessories, are characteristics which have placed him among the foremost literary men of his age. The daring, too, with which he assails the most reverent beliefs of men, and the



eagerness with which in Catholic countries every assault upon the Church is hailed; all these things have given to the "*Vie de Jésus*" an extraordinary but factitious interest. Apart from these, it neither expresses any widespread feeling, nor has it produced any. A thing of summer lightning, it plays harmlessly in an almost cloudless sky, launching no bolt either to harm or to terrify those who walk in the peaceful fields of faith.

Few have felt that serious refutation was necessary. A cry of surprise at its absurdity, or of indignation at its blasphemy, has been the chief response elicited by it. Argument is impossible with a writer of mere romance. Historical criticism cannot deal with a man so arbitrary and disingenuous in his use of evidence. Philosophy refuses to recognise a man who, repudiating her inductive processes, starts with an *a priori* principle which is to determine what are facts. Religion cannot appeal to a man who is so destitute of spiritual conception, as that he can stand before the holy Christ and see in Him the perpetrator of pious frauds. For in nothing has M. Renan more signally failed than in the intuitive power of interpretation which constitutes the true historian. Whatever the reproductive power of his intellectual imagination he must be absolutely denied the spiritual faculty which recognises truth and goodness. Again we are compelled to ask, "Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Falling upon this stone, the mightiest are "broken." He who can stand before the Christ of the Gospels—so sublime in intellect, so transcendent in goodness, so spiritual in conception—and conceive the possibility of the intellectual absurdities and the moral delinquencies which M. Renan charges upon Him, must, if there be any reality in moral perception, be utterly destitute of the faculty by which, according to the

Apostle Paul, "spiritual things are discerned." Concerning the Pharisees, Christ Himself said that, "having eyes, they saw not." Standing in the full blaze of His spiritual power and goodness, they could blindly ask Him for a sign; whereas, to all who were not spiritually blind, He was His own sufficient sign—His life was its own sufficient light—His goodness its own sufficient attraction. As the tides respond to the moon, as the corn bows before the wind, so do all spiritual souls to the Holy Christ. Had their moral sense been pure, they would have felt that the truth in Him could not be a lie—that the right in Him could not be wrong—that the Divine in Him could not be of Beelzebub, nor even of poor imperfect humanity. These things surely needed no prophetic attestation, no miraculous endorsement, no historical corroboration.

Must we not apply the same test, and say that he who does not in the Gospels see the spiritual Christ is spiritually blind? The Divine Master does not need to bring credentials with Him. His is a life that only Divine wisdom could conceive, that only Divine goodness could constitute. But applying such a criterion as this to scholarly and philosophic men like M. Renan, we must, of course, lay our account with the contemptuous rejoinder, "Are we blind also?" And yet we may not forbear it. It is Christ's own test of the spiritual. "Flesh and blood cannot reveal to us" the divinity and moral glory of the Christ; only "our Father who is in Heaven." Following and worshipping our Divine Lord, we must be willing to bear this reproach also—to the ingenuous and modest one of the most painful that can be borne—that we think ourselves wiser than the gifted and the learned.

The controversy concerning the Christ does not, then, disquiet us; save, perhaps, in France, we venture to think that it is nearly exhausted, and that His position is virtually conceded.

Our own churches are unswerving in their fealty and worship. They are quick and sensitive, even to passionateness, in their resentment of any suspected wavering. He is the Deity whom we worship, the Redeemer by whom we are saved, the one perfect example whose steps we are to follow. Even the insidious heresy that resolves the death of the cross into simple self-sacrifice, and the atonement into mere moral influence, finds little favour amongst us. The healthy instinct which tells us that righteousness must have precedence, even of love—must be that to which love conforms—the necessary form that all expressions of love assume, resents the maudlin theology that finds its ultimate root and rest in mere benevolence. Our churches hold to the conception of Christ's death as a proper expiatory atonement, having a legal aspect Godwards, as well as a moral aspect manwards.

These great truths are our life and our power. They constitute the difference between negations and beliefs. Negations cannot save men. He who truly believes has greater power than thousands who only deny. Precious and indispensable as are intellectual gifts and acquisitions, these are neither the power of our pulpits nor the life of our churches; our strength is in our message, and not in the learning or eloquence with which we clothe it. It may be but the hand of a child, but if it holds up the cross, it holds the power that can save the world. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Far distant be the day—as we devoutly believe it is—when our churches shall falter in these beliefs, or hesitate in their utterance. The spiritual forces of every age of the past, of every agency of the present, they must also be of the future. The world can never outgrow its need of the Christ—of His divinity for its worship—of His atonement for its sin—of His example for its imitation. Forms of preaching may



change, misinterpretations may be rectified, new harmonies and glories of Christianity may be discovered; but the Christ will be enthroned upon men's hearts, as He is enthroned now—their utmost conception of divinity, love, and goodness. "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ, Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb. When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father."

The controversy concerning the Book is much more radical and pervading. It has long been foreseen as the next inevitable controversy of Protestantism. The infallible Bible superseded the infallible Pope; and being what it is—a collection of miscellaneous writings, the productions of some twelve centuries—it was inevitable that, sooner or later, many complex questions concerning its authorship and authority would arise. The marvel is that the conflict has been so long delayed. But it has come upon us at length, and perhaps none of us now living will see its issue. Dogma has been superseded by criticism. Every claim of the Book is subjected to the most searching tests—whence it came, what it is, and what authority it assumes.

The first result of such questioning has been fierce conflict, and some degree of confusion on both sides. Science, flushed with new discoveries, has rashly pronounced its facts to be incompatible with the declarations of the Bible—geology has dug up stones to throw at it—philology has assailed it with hard words—astronomy has declared that "the stars in their courses fight against it"—history has summoned witnesses to prove it legendary. And the natural effect of this combined assault has been alarm and exasperation in those to whom it is precious as life itself, and

dear as the holiest hopes. These in their turn have rashly denied the facts from which science has drawn such premature inferences, or have put forward preposterous theories to account for them. On neither side can either the methods or the tone of controversy be commended. Science has been arrogant, inimical, premature. Theology has been dogmatic, jealous, and ignorant. Science has been eagerly irreligious, full of moral scepticism. Theology has been eagerly denunciatory, full of dogmatic intolerance. Science has insisted upon crude theories and unproven hypotheses as if they were demonstrated facts. Theology has refused to admit that even its human interpretations of Scripture may be wrong.

And this is the present attitude of the students of these two great records of God—unreasoning hostility on the one hand, unreasoning fear and objurgation on the other. Instead of humbly sitting down side by side, to help each other and to find out *Him*, they have excommunicated and anathematised each other. Perhaps it was inevitable that in their first contact, new science, proud of her youthful achievements and excited by the future before her; and old theology, to whom science was largely a sealed book and entrenched in her traditional interpretation, should thus misunderstand each other. Esau disparages the birth-right, and Jacob employs reprehensible means to secure it.

But this can be only for a little while. It is the property of truth to discover and harmonise all things. Science, by her own progress, will be compelled to reconsider her speculations, and theology to revise her interpretations. Science needs the Bible to make it devout; the Bible needs science in all its departments to help in its interpretation. And as surely as the God of truth is one, so surely will these two volumes of His revelation to man be found equally true and authoritative; the one expounding

the meaning of and bearing a wondrous witness to the other. Already, indeed, we see this in part, for some of the greatest names of modern science are among the devoutest believers of the Bible. Faraday is one of its preachers, and Owen one of its defenders against infidel science ; and, with a goodly array of others, they have testified that science, when conclusively ascertained, is in perfect harmony with Scripture, when rightly interpreted.

The course and issue of this great controversy will probably be analogous to that concerning the Christ. Rationalistic theories will be exhausted, inasmuch as, one after another, they will fail to account for all the facts and phenomena of Scripture ; until at length the Holy Book established upon, not a traditional and dogmatic, but upon an intelligible and critical basis, is demonstrated to be God's supernatural and authoritative revelation to man. But do not let us be afraid of saying that this can be only by a process of mutual adjustment. In every age the true instinct of the Church has recognised the Divine and Holy in the Book, just as it has in the Christ. In this it cannot be mistaken ; but it does not therefore follow that its intuitive recognition has always been justified by tenable arguments, or that its interpretations have always been right. The divine record is one thing, the human interpretation of it is another ; and every interpretation must be rejected as erroneous that does not include a full and fair consideration of all the phenomena.

It is sad enough that, instead of simply exploring the rich Gospel field, and satisfying our souls with its precious fruits of life, we should thus have to defend it against invaders. Instead of garnering its truths into our hearts we have thus to make them matter of intellectual controversy. Instead of speaking them to sorrowful hearts and into dying ears we are compelled to debate whether they be God's truths at all, and



have any right thus to speak life and comfort to men. But we may not shrink ; we can have no satisfaction in an unproven faith, no strength in vague misgivings. Let the Book and all that is in it be fully submitted to every test of both friend and foe, and " may God defend the right ! " We seek no victory but for truth, we believe that in the long run no other is possible. And if from our religious side of the controversy we confidently say we have no fear for the issue, we do not utter words of ignorant and foolish boasting, but words that the history of eighteen centuries, that a thousand proofs of the divine presence and ten thousand instances of divine power, abundantly justify. Difficulties there are, some of which the light of advancing knowledge has removed ; others, for which, as yet, we have found no solution. But unless our moral sense has absolutely befooled us—unless the spiritual history of this marvellous Book is a lie—unless our own experience of its spiritual power be a delusion, it will be abundantly demonstrated to be " the word of the Lord which endureth for ever."

Some of the most damaging assaults upon the Divine Authorship of the Bible have really been assaults only upon untenable theories of inspiration, which a more justifiable position utterly disables. From my own intercourse with the more intelligent members of different evangelical Churches I verily believe that the dogma of verbal inspiration has, in thousands of religious men, produced a widespread revolt, and a very painful and perplexing unsettledness respecting the true character and claims of Scripture. It is affirmed to be necessary for the divine authority and infallibility of Scripture, that every word of it should have been dictated by the Holy Spirit—as an author dictates sentences to an amanuensis. Not contented with the Catholic formula of Thomas Aquinas "*Auctor Sacræ Scripturæ est Deus*," some of the old divines venture to say that "*singula verba a Spiritu*

Sancto in calamum dictata," that "notarii sive tabelliones Spiritus Sancti, manus Christi, calami Dei auctoris." One old dogmatist even maintained that "the very style of Scripture is vitiated by no false grammar, no barbarisms, no solecisms." Were these merely fancies of the schoolmen, we should simply smile at them; but they are reiterated by modern writers. Thus Professor Gaussen represents the sacred writers as different instruments of music, upon which in turns the Holy Spirit plays. "The Lord God, mighty in harmony, applied as it were the finger of his Spirit to the stops which He had chosen for the hour of His purpose, and for the unity of His celestial hymn." Mr. Burgon says:—"Every book of the Bible, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it (where are we to stop?), every letter of it is the direct utterance of the Most High." Dr. Candlish does not hesitate to say, "Not merely the whole treatise, but every sentence and syllable of it, shall be as much to be ascribed to God as its author as if He had Himself written it with His own hand." "They are very miscellaneous papers; *every sort of character is personated*, as it were, in the preparation of them; every different style is employed; every age is represented, and every calling."

Surely these are very solemn and daring claims, and involve very momentous consequences. If this be the claim of Scripture itself, where is the proof? If it be merely a human conception of what is necessary to constitute the infallible authority which the Scripture does claim, irreverent temerity and perilous presumption can hardly go farther. Who are we that we should prescribe the conditions of a divine book; that we should have such exact knowledge of the process whereby God inspired His servants; that we should thus rashly carry the ark of God into battle, and stake the whole credit of divine revelation upon a human theory of verbal infallibility?

Is it not presumption to approach the Book of God with a theory of any kind? Does not true philosophy as well as true piety demand that we simply and humbly search the Scriptures to ascertain what they themselves testify concerning their authorship? To settle beforehand a theory of inspiration, and to support it by just such facts as will fit it in disregard of the rest, is to be every bit as arbitrary and rationalistic as M. Renan himself. In both cases it is the rationalism that makes human reason determine what *ought to be* the phenomena of divine revelation. The very point is assumed which has to be proved.

Without any such theories we may, I think, easily discern in the Book phenomena that will satisfy both our reason and our faith. Permit me, in very few words, to indicate where I venture to think we may confidently rest.

No reader of these marvellous writings can deny that they put forth supernatural claims, and none of us will question that they establish these by overwhelming evidence. The sacred writers claim to be filled with the Spirit of the Lord, and to speak "in the name of the Lord." This they demonstrate by their superhuman knowledge, their superhuman wisdom, and their superhuman acts—by a manner of history, a gift of prophecy, a sublime theology, a transcendent morality, a knowledge of human nature, and a wondrous harmony of continuous revelation through twelve hundred years, utterly inconceivable to unassisted human thought.

As a crucial instance we take the book of Genesis; its *theology*, so utterly contrasted with all coeval mythologies, so perfectly divine, so faultlessly pure. Its *human characters*—Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, neither demigods nor heroes; but, although in constant intercourse with Jehovah, always proper men. Its *elevated and unfaltering morality*, so that even in such a complex character as that of Jacob,



the distinction between right and wrong is never for a moment left doubtful. A morality that wonderfully contrasts with the morality even of Plato, a thousand years later—that anticipates even the elevated Christian morality of this nineteenth century. And blended with all this, a pervading and prominent *supernaturalism*—a miraculous record of the beginnings of the human race, which furnishes the only explanation of the phenomena of human character, and of the facts of human history. And this, the product of a writer of calm, intellectual greatness, of almost unparalleled sagacity, of unmistakable moral goodness; one of the sublimest intellects, one of the saintliest men that the world has seen; whom it is impossible, with any regard to intellectual or moral congruities, to regard either as a fool who is deceived, or a knave who deceives. Here, then, is unmistakable proof of the Divine.

And this book of Genesis is only the first of a long series of tracts, produced during a long series of centuries, all of which, more or less, have the same characteristics, and bear testimony to their prototype, all of which are in wonderful harmony—historical, doctrinal, and moral—with it and with each other—each casual in its origin, distinctive in its form, complete in itself, and impressed with the strongly-marked individuality of its author; and yet all constituting one great and developing system of Divine theology, growing with the growth of the world, and widening with its enlarging experience—history, prophecy, sermon, and psalm—all combining into one harmonious whole; full of deep theological and spiritual harmonies; each workman preparing his contribution apart, but the whole brought together by the Great Architect, and combined into one august and symmetrical temple of truth. This is the true miracle of the Bible—its inward unity, not its outward uniformity; nay, would not the outward uniformity

infinitely lessen, if not destroy, the miracle of the inward unity? "There are diversities of operation, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

Or, as one more illustration, take the New Testament records of the Christ; which, whatever their resemblances, are at any rate as remarkable for their diversities; each author manifestly writing with perfect naturalness and spontaneousness, and with the independence and confidence of perfect truth. If there be any psychological characteristics of a writer, or any historical criteria of a narrative that can be relied upon, it is impossible to doubt the perfect honesty and trustworthiness of the four Evangelists. They cannot be discredited without the utmost moral scepticism, without outraging all the probabilities that constitute moral certainty, and sacrificing all sober judgment to an insane credulity. For the alternative is this—either these men are truthful witnesses or they have dared to profane the most awful things of God, and to tamper with the most sacred feelings of men; either they are faithful historians, or they are the most audacious of the world's impostors. Combinations of ignorance and fanaticism may be supposed, but beyond certain limits the result is a monstrosity of the imagination, not a possibility of experience. And yet, the four narratives of these four Galilean peasants combine to give us the peerless, perfect character of the Christ. Whence came this wonderful conception, presented thus in fourfold portraiture? For one human imagination to create such a character were a greater miracle than Jesus Himself, and yet here are four. How is this Jesus to be accounted for? How came He, a peasant of Judea, first to have such divine ideas, and then such a marvellous power of inspiring four other peasants so to record them, as that through nineteen centuries of Christian belief and literature no holy man has ever produced a fifth Gospel, or a second "Acts of the

Apostles," or an additional Apostolical Epistle? A supernatural authorship is the only rational explanation of such phenomena.

Or again we might ask—How is it that the topics of Scripture throughout are so wonderfully selected, so wonderfully recorded, that precisely the things are taught and the omissions made that their religious purpose requires, and that adapt Christianity and its Bible to the religious life of all the nations of the earth?

How is it that these simple herdsman and fishermen restrict themselves to a mere narrative of facts; that they indulge in no expressions of surprise, no exclamations of indignation, no comments, no moralisings? How is it that these men, being Jews, push aside all the circumstantialia of their Judaism, and by an unerring intuition lay a simple and firm hold upon the spiritual, the catholic, and the eternal? Here, again, are phenomena that no theory of mere human authorship can account for. Indeed, the proof of the Divine in Scripture is literally inexhaustible; almost every week some unsuspected but beautiful and harmonious line of proof is opened out, compelling us to recognise in the authorship of Scripture the indubitable marks of the supernatural and the Divine.

Equally indubitable, on the other hand, are the marks of human authorship. Who can read any book of Scripture and not feel that a genuine human heart beats in it? If our consciousness can tell us anything it tells us that these are proper men, inspired by God, but yet retaining the full exercise of every human faculty and feeling—the human instruments of a Divine power, but expressing in their writings all their varied human personality, circumstances, and moods.

Else were the Bible unspeakably less precious to us. Were it written as the tables of the law were



written, as the inscription on Belshazzar's banquetting house was written—did God speak to us as the musician speaks through his instrument, as the ventriloquist simulates a voice, the Word might come to us with Divine authority, but it would come without human sympathy. It might find us in the secret place of our soul, but it would awe and terrify us there. Its wonderful knowledge of us is bearable, only in virtue of its human tenderness. It finds in us depths that no other plumb-line has fathomed—it enters chambers of our soul that nothing else has searched—it shows itself familiar with experiences that even the wife of our bosom may not share—it puts into words the deepest mysteries of our being—it understands all our feelings—it anticipates all our experience—it gives definiteness and intelligence to what we ourselves realise only dimly and vaguely—it is as if we stood before God—it bears faithful witness for Him—it tolerates no sin, excuses no evil—abates no assertion of the wrong, no impression of the enormity of evil. How unbearable all this, were it not for the wonderful human sympathies with which this Divine knowledge is clothed! Wherever we open it—at the sorrows of Job, the mission of Moses, the penitence of David, the labours of Paul, or, chief of all, the tragedy of the Cross, it is tenderly, intensely human—full of the thoughts, and feelings, and struggles of “men of like passions with ourselves”—a human soul informed by a Divine prescience, a Divine knowledge incarnated in human sympathies. It were as great a loss to eliminate the human element from the Christ as the human element from the Bible. The human experience is as precious as the Divine communication. Whenever either element is lost sight of, both the Christ and the Bible are reduced and damaged. Docetæ or Corinthians, they are alike heretics and injurious.

The sacred writers, therefore, are no mere bearers

of despatches from the court of Heaven. They are God-inspired, God-filled men. Their human intellect and their human soul alike employed in the authorship of Scripture—"Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The old Eutychean heresy represented humanity as absorbed and lost whenever it came into contact with the Divine; hence it denied the human character of the sorrows and sympathies of Jesus. And what is it but to repeat this heresy, to resolve the humanity of the sacred writers into passive instruments of the Divine? Is it not to make all the pious passion of David, all the personal avowals of Paul unreal, to reduce these men to the mock personages of a sacred drama, and the Divine Spirit to the simulator of various human voices and feelings? Does not every instinct within us, every reverential and holy feeling, shrink from this? Be the inspiration of Scripture what it may, the product *in all* its characteristics must be genuine.

We read the Pentateuch, and we sympathise with the hopes, and fears, and strivings, and prayers of the great Jewish leader dealing with a rude and disorderly multitude. We read the Psalms, and we sympathise with the many-stringed soul of the Psalmist, with his great pulsing heart, full of beliefs and doubts, and sins and sorrows, and hopes and fears. And we can believe anything rather than that the 51st Psalm is not a genuine personal penitence, and the 103rd Psalm a genuine personal gratitude, and that we are listening to mere dramatic passion, as in the broodings of a "Hamlet" or the ravings of a "Lear."

We read the Gospels, and when John tells us that "he who saw it bare witness," we cannot conceive that the Holy Spirit dictated the words of the evidence that he was to give, for wherein would this differ from a forgery? We read the Epistles of Paul, and on every page we feel our contact with a peculiar and strongly-marked religious experience; with

Christianity incarnated in a remarkable and self-asserting man. And we could as soon disbelieve in our own consciousness as believe that all this personal religious feeling is unreal, and that words merely representing it were dictated to him. Is it not as truly Paul speaking to us as the Divine Spirit? Are not his epistolary familiarities—his affectionate greetings and solicitudes—his directions about his cloak and parchments—his *naïve* acknowledgments that he had repented of his first letter to the Corinthians, although he no longer repented—not only inimitably natural, but unmistakably genuine?

It is only by thus fully and fearlessly recognising the human element in the authorship of Scripture that we can understand it and find reality in it. And is it not monstrous that a man, delivering a great religious message from God, is to be declared invalidated because incidentally he makes a scientific allusion according to the notions of his day? Difficulty there is if it be insisted upon that the very words were dictated by the Holy Spirit; for then he would be made to simulate human ignorance as well as human character. But this is most gratuitously to put an irresistible weapon of offence into the hand of infidelity. An untenable position always compromises more than itself. Exaggerated claims provoke exaggerated repudiation; and it were difficult to say whether the Bible has suffered more from unrighteous assailants or from unwise defenders.

May we not, then, rest with the simple recognition of these two elements of Biblical authorship, and with the inferences which they enable? Why should we crave a scientific harmony of them, a theory that will account for all the phenomena, and that may be reduced to a formula? Is this either necessary or possible? Has God given us exact formulæ of other truths—of the Incarnation, of the Atonement, for instance? Has He not left room for the exercise of moral faculty



in their investigation? Conscientious Deism, conscientious Socianism, conscientious Rationalism, are all possible. There is no demonstration, logical or otherwise, to force the convictions of the unwilling or unspiritual. For the man of spiritual eye and spiritual sympathy there is abundant proof; but it is not so drawn out into propositions as that a man must outrage reason to disbelieve. The investigation of all spiritual things demands spiritual faculties. Only the soul that is spiritual can see the spiritual God. "He that is of the truth heareth my voice." Such exercise of moral faculty, therefore, is demanded for the interpretation of Scripture. He who will array a difficulty arising from the human element of authorship against a proof of the Divine element of authorship may do so, but he is guilty of the moral perversity of making a mere human ignorance a ground for denying God.

From the very nature of the case a scientific theory of Biblical inspiration appears to be impossible. That God is supernaturally present in the authorship of the Bible is attested by a thousand proofs of miraculous knowledge, miraculous act, and miraculous goodness; but *how* the Divine Spirit came into conjunction with the human thought, and will, and experiences of the sacred writers we may not know. It is enough to be assured that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"—that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," or if the reading be preferred, that "all Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," declarations which certainly affirm that every part of the holy writings is full of God, but which give us no information respecting the methods of His inspiration. Concerning these, neither the assertions nor the phenomena of Scripture teach us anything, and where Scripture itself is silent surely human theorising is

intrusive. On what authority is it affirmed, on the one hand, that the men were inspired and not the writings ; or, on the other, that the writings were inspired and not the men ; or that because all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, every word of it is miraculously dictated ; or, again, that only the religious utterances of the sacred writers were inspired ? What is all this but being "wise above what is written," but prescribing human conditions, within which alone Divine revelation is possible ? So, doubtless, we should have prescribed conditions for the Incarnation of the Christ. Who of us would not have shrunk from saying that He could "grow in knowledge," that He could pray that His cup might pass, that He could be made "perfect by suffering" ? In this Divine wisdom has not hesitated to disregard our narrow and arbitrary human conditions, and to rest the infallibility of the incarnate Christ upon higher and broader grounds.

Who, then, are we that we should lay down conditions for the incarnation of the Divine Spirit, and declare that we cannot conceive of it—that we shall be left in doubt and embarrassment, unless we are assured that every human word was supernaturally dictated ? What if God has thought fit to discredit our narrow limitations by phenomena incompatible with them ? What if He purposely leave us to certain difficulties and doubts, through discrepancies which we cannot explain and lacunæ which we cannot supply ? What if in this also "the foolishness of God is wiser than men" ? What if He demand of our spiritual souls a constant exercise of holy sympathies and conscientious judgments ? Is the Book a worse moral teacher, or shall we be worse as learners of it for such demands ? Even when insuperable, difficulties are not disproofs ; they are simply relative to our knowledge, and tests of our candour and humility. A thousand things that we do not know

cannot disprove a single thing that we do know. Who ever presumes to construct a scientific theory of the Incarnation of the Christ—to draw a boundary line—or to describe the harmony of what is Divine and what is human in Jesus of Nazareth? Who ever attempts a scientific theory of the regeneration and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and a discrimination of the Divine and human elements in the acts and processes of a spiritual life? And these are the only other conjunctions of the Divine and human that we know. Why, then, should we insist on a scientific theory of inspiration? Why should we not be satisfied with a simple recognition of facts, and judge each phenomenon and try to solve each difficulty in the light of these? Why should we so passionately seek to get rid of responsibility for individual judgments by a preliminary theory which shall rule all cases? We are all prone to wish that God had made doctrines somewhat more explicit, evidences somewhat more demonstrative; that He had more exactly told us what we are to believe, what service to render, how much property to give, how many prayers to proffer; and by a thousand creeds, and traditions, and self-imposed rules, we try to furnish ourselves with formulæ for these things. It were an easy, but it were also an injurious and ignoble thing, by a simple recitation of articles, to dispose of all the individual difficulties of revelation. Creeds and formularies have their great and manifold uses—Scientific Theology cannot be dispensed with—as “aids to faith” they are a precious possession; but alas for our Christian intelligence and manhood, if we prefix our formulæ to the sacred volume, and thereby absolve ourselves from further interpretation of its contents. It is part of our moral probation to “prove all things,” to examine and weigh evidence, to form judgments, to exercise spiritual faculty, to follow the guidance of the light within us, and to keep it purely and brightly burning that it



may guide us rightly. It is the great law of God's spiritual kingdom that wrong moral feeling will lead us into error, and right moral feeling will guide us into truth. Like the light of God in the lower revelation of His works, the light of God in the higher revelation of His word shines by its own light; and they who fail to see it are the blind. To the man with a spiritual eye, an eye formed for receiving spiritual light, it is its own witness—a manifest revelation from God, inspired and sacred as no other book is—related to other books as the incarnate Christ is related to other men.

It is well, too, that we should sometimes be made to feel the necessary limitations of our human science—to have our ambitious speculations reduced to a simple recognition of Divine facts—to be compelled to stand still on the margin of the great deep of Divine operation, and to feel that its waves will not roll back at our bidding. One half of our disabling perplexities and unprofitable controversies spring from the unhallowed demands of the speculative reason—from our inability to discern where the ripple-mark of Divine mystery must arrest the foot of eager inquiry. Our science would analyse the very Shechinah flame that indicates the presence of God, when our piety should simply worship and obey.

But if there *is* a Divine element in the authorship of Scripture, there are moral certainties in which we may assuredly rest.

We cannot doubt, for instance, that the Book is *sufficient for all the purposes for which it was given*—for the revelation to man of God's purpose and will. It may be only a bush that burns with fire, but the fire that burns in it is the glory whereby God reveals Himself; and in virtue of it the place becomes holy ground. We have assuredly to do with the living God, and his were blindness indeed who saw only the bush and did not see Him who is manifested in it.

God never speaks in vain; however men may refuse to see and hear, the manifestation is sufficient—it is all the illumination, all the authority that were needed. The Book is “able to make us wise unto salvation.” Whatever the mode of its production, we are bound to receive the product as a sufficient and authoritative revelation of God’s will. Before this can be refused it must be shown, not only that it contains elements of human authorship, but that it contains no elements of Divine authorship.

And we may also be certain that *the human element of authorship in which the Divine is incarnated is essentially true and holy*. We cannot, without blasphemy, conceive of the Divine as thus coming into conjunction with anything false or evil—lending the sanction of its sacredness to the promulgation of any untruth, either historical, scientific, or religious. However the human element may work in its conjunction with the Divine, a moral limit to the possibility of error is thus put; and we are bold to affirm that the first instance of essential untruth has yet to be proved. Difficulties there are, but if, as demonstrated by its own proper proofs, there be a Divine element in Scripture, some solution of every difficulty is possible. The one impossible thing is, that by any presence of His in the authorship of Scripture, the God of perfect knowledge and truth should sanction a delusion or a lie.

Brethren, in this great matter may we not calmly rest here? Do not these proven facts and moral certainties enable us to enthrone the Bible in a place as high and as sacred as could be given to it by any theory of verbal inspiration? Must not the soul that demurs to these be vitiated in all high spiritual feeling? We deeply resent all disparagement of the Bible. He who assails it assails that which, next to the Christ, is our most sacred thing. It is not our salvation, but it is the record and witness of it—it is

not our spiritual inheritance, but it is the title-deed of it—it is not our spiritual life, but it is the guide, and sustenance, and stimulus of it. He who damages it, therefore, diminishes our assurance, and confuses our faith and love. If the Bible be not the infallible truth of God, the Divine revelation of Jesus Christ, then “are we of all men most miserable.”

Whatever, therefore, we find in it, that let us fully admit; whether our science can explain it or not. Though carried upon a common cart, the ark of God needs not our profane human hands to steady it. In a thousand things its divinity has been manifested, a thousand times its sacredness has been vindicated. It has survived the assaults, and the corruptions, and—what, perhaps, is more—the unauthorised claims and foolish defences of eighteen centuries. It has quickened myriads of human hearts, and sanctified myriads of human lives. Wherever it has come it has brought civilisation and virtue, religion and charity.

It has won and ruled all that is good in the world. All holy affinities are drawn to it. It has received the homage of all who are noble, and has sanctified them to a greater nobleness still. And never was it so vital and potent as it is now—a richer fount of spiritual blessing—a more absolute law of spiritual life. “The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times.” “The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” “Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?”

Concerning the Church, many and vital are the questions which are just now vehemently debated. These, however, I must forbear; I have already trespassed to the utmost limit of the indulgence accorded to your chairman. I will simply say that on all



matters that affect the interests of the Church of Christ it is our right and duty to speak; and that on matters affecting the Established Church every Englishman is bound to speak; for, theoretically, that Church claims our allegiance, and, practically, it enforces our support. These things, however, with others that have occurred to me, I must leave to your own intelligence and care.

To conclude, should we not—as one of the great sections of the Church of Christ in these lands—very earnestly ask ourselves how far we are qualified to do the great work, and to fight the great battles of the times upon which we are fallen?

First: there is qualification of *ecclesiastical character and position*. In this, I think, we are pre-eminent. We stand in perfect freedom—to inquire, believe, and serve according to the convictions of conscience; we stand discharged of all liabilities for our faith to sovereigns, parliaments, or synods—each church is responsible only to Christ. So far we are in the best of all positions for the investigation and service of truth; there is nothing to hinder the incorporation into our theology of all the results of advancing scholarship. No creeds of former centuries come into incongruous conflict with the enlightenment of this. Nor, our enemies being judges, is our orthodoxy the less firm for this liberty. We need no tortuous devices for reconciling our beliefs with our formularies—our conscience with our subscription. We may not advance further than other Churches—perhaps not so far—for the revolt of thought from restrictions is apt to be lawless; but we can embody our advance in free and natural practical expression. We can freely follow the light which “breaks forth from God’s word,” accepting all that we believe to be truth, and repudiating all that we believe to be heresy.

Secondly: there is a qualification of *educational*

*culture.* It were foolish to affirm that in this respect our ministers are equal to the clergy of the Establishment. Unrighteous exclusion from the universities of the nation, with other social disabilities, have not been without their effect. But with the removal of these the traditions of old Nonconformist erudition are beginning to revive. Some amongst us are not a whit behind the very chiefest, in both Biblical and classical scholarship; while our general ministerial culture is advancing with rapid strides upon that of the national clergy—reluctant as some may be to recognise this.

Our pulpits are occupied by men whose sermons and defences of the truth, for breadth, learning, and power, will bear a favourable comparison with those of any section of the Church.

Our periodical literature is comparatively large, and with few exceptions it is able, Christian, and Catholic. Perhaps we need a higher appreciation of its value—a more practical use of its power. Of larger contributions to theological science we cannot boast much; not because we lack scholarly and able men, but because we cannot provide for adequate leisure for the production of elaborate works. The theological literature of the Establishment is not supplied by its parochial clergy. And when one thinks of the men amongst us of cultured power, who might be “set for the defence of the Gospel,” but who are hindered by the pressing demands of pastoral or tutorial life—for which, perhaps, they have no special aptitudes—why, one sighs for some canonry, arch-deaconry, or deanery, that would enable works which might enrich the whole Church of Christ.

Finally: there is a qualification of *earnest practical work*—of personal consecration, sanctity and self-sacrifice—of successful labour in saving souls, for which our churches are honourably distinguished. And, after all, the best vindication of Christianity, and of any specific part of it, is its practical results.

To those who question either the Christ or the Bible, the best possible reply is their spiritual history ; the demonstrations of their Divine power in ten thousand times ten thousand saved souls. Other names have no such power to charm men's guilt, other books have no such power to transform men's lives. If truths may be tested by their practical results, then the world has seen no worship, no sanctity, no consecration, no hope, like those inspired by the manger and the Cross. Robbed of these, the Church would be poor indeed—its heart left cold, its life unblessed, its power paralysed. When, therefore, men put forth their negations or disparagements, it is a sufficient answer to show them the effect of the Cross, when it is held up before the despairing eye of the guilty ; how magically the heavy burden of guilt falls off, the serpent-bitten soul is healed, and the dark, despairing eye is reilluminated with hope and rapture—or the effect of the Book when it becomes the guide and comforter of a forgiven man's life, or when its precious words are spoken into "the dull cold ear of death."

Blessed be God that if we live in an age of daring and desperate heresies, it is an age also of abounding and successful work—of missions abroad and of un-resting energies at home ; and "God always maketh us to triumph in every place." Never in the history of the Church have the Cross and the Book won more signal triumphs. Healed men are more unanswerable vindications than all the eloquence of a Peter and a John. One saved soul is a more triumphant demonstration of divinity than a thousand reasonings. They who are healed will be slow to question the power that healed them ; while they who behold such "notable miracles" can "say nothing against them." This argument, then, may be employed by us all. Be it ours mightily to ply it ! Whilst earnestly employing all the resources of reasoning and scholarship, let us mainly trust to the demonstration furnished by



renewed souls—the practical fruit of a full and fervent preaching of Christ crucified. As Christ is preached—in churches, in theatres, in ragged-schools, by the wayside, souls will be saved: and as souls are saved, gainsayers will be silenced.

Shall we not, then, even now seek a fresh anointing for this? Spirit of the living God, Revealer of the glorified Christ, Inspirer of the living Word, enkindle our cold hearts into a supreme and passionate yearning for this; endow us with that “power from on high” which alone can accomplish this; help us from this hour to go forth in the spirit of the Master’s service, in the spirit of the Master’s compassion, in the spirit of the Master’s passion; and mightily to preach the Word so that many may be saved; and that again it may be demonstrated that while the crucified Christ whom we preach is “a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek; yet, to them that are saved, He is Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

## THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE.

[An address from the chair of the Congregational Union at the Autumnal Session of its Jubilee year, 1881.]

DEAR AND HONOURED BRETHREN,—The free course of the spirit is grievously hindered by vindications of its embodiments. To men intent upon spiritual purposes it is irritating and humiliating to have to expend time and energies in contentions for the validity of mere organisation. Compared with the life of the spirit, forms of Church construction are of trivial importance; of no importance at all, indeed, save as they embody and nurture the life itself. Some embodiment or other all spiritual things must take; and upon the fitness of it, the fulness and the fruitfulness, the freedom and the aggressive power, nay, sometimes the very continuance of the life may depend.

Great principles, moreover, are often determined by very subordinate conditions. Battles upon which the freedom or the fate of nations may turn are often joined on trivial occasions. This, to sensible men, is the only excuse for ecclesiastical polemics, and for such vindications of the legitimacy and fitness of our Congregational Church order as this Jubilee seemed to demand in my address from the chair in May.

We may, I think, to-day venture upon ground intrinsically higher. We very gladly turn from mere embodiments of the spiritual life to the spiritual life itself. It will be equally congruous with our Jubilee to attempt to set some principles of it in the light of clear definitions, to appraise their intrinsic qualities, and to urge their practical application to the interests of our churches.

For while, in their own high place of right, principles themselves are eternal and unswerving, and amid the conflicting and confusing forces of human life work out their purposed issues, we, in our ignorance or waywardness, may discern them mistily, or leave them weakly, and find them again only when, after confused and hurtful wanderings, we return to the paths which they rule.

Even in our noblest contentions, chance impulses or passing prejudices and passions too often usurp the place of simple principles, Divine methods, and impersonal ends. Right itself may be pursued as a mere expediency, and for selfish purposes. Victory may be sought for the passion of the polemic rather than for the conscience of truth.

At the best, there is in our contention much of blind instinct, and of the maintenance of a line of tradition along which the light of principles fitfully plays rather than steadily shines.

We all need, therefore, to keep our ideal before us, to set ourselves in the light of God's thought and purposes, and honestly to test our aims, our methods, and our tempers by the lofty principles of the Divine order. It is not so easy to free ourselves from the dominant passions of the hour, from the traditions of Churches and schools—to appraise movements and qualities as it were *in vacuo*; to determine whether our guiding star be solar or planetary; whether our ideal itself will bear the tests of the pure white light of truth, whether it satisfies the spiritual principles and instincts of our own moral nature and of our concept of God Himself.

For such an inquiry, indeed, few men are adequate, and yet it is imperative upon even the feeblest. My own modest purpose is in some simple, practical ways to apply to our Church aims and methods such tests as our spiritual principles and our own moral consciousness may supply.



For the domain of principles is not so much that of metaphysics as of practical experience; principles themselves are tested not so much by theories as by the uses of life.

I. The first essential in the maintenance of a true Church life is the fundamental distinction between Divine ordinations and human circumstance—the former determining principles, the latter expediencies.

In practical Church life these are continually getting intermixed. In subtle forms the foot of expediency intrudes into the domain of Divine principles, and sometimes great principles are permitted to lapse into mere expediencies. Few things are more difficult than the practical maintenance of the boundary line between the two. Disregard of it is the fruitful parent of most of our ecclesiastical strifes, our mistakes, and our weaknesses. To exalt mere human expediency to the place and inviolability of Divine principle, or to reduce Divine principle to the place of mere human expediency, is fatal to the authority of both, and confuses both the Divine order and human conduct.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes the distinction even in Divine institutions—the “things” of Judaism “that are ready to vanish away,” and the things of Christianity that abide, “the kingdom that cannot be moved.”

In Christianity itself the distinction between the essential and the circumstantial is just as imperative. It is the distinction between spirit and body, the building and the scaffolding, the warfare and its weapons, the end and the means. And in proportion as the means are effective—when the spirit is greatly ministered to by the body, when the building rapidly rises, when signal victories are won—it becomes difficult to keep them from usurping a vital place.

Forms of truth are shaped by the exigences of polemical warfare; and because they are made mighty

through God, we give to the casual creed the place of normal truth ; the strategic position becomes part of the city of God.

Forms of Church life which the expediency of special circumstances may dictate are made normal and authoritative, irrespective altogether of varying conditions. Because certain forms of Church life have counteracted special abuses, vindicated spiritual prerogatives, and enshrined precious liberties, we contend for them as in all circumstances and ages essential to spiritual life.

Forms of Church worship which have specially ministered to peculiar conditions of culture or feeling, or which were the imperative alternatives of a degraded sensuousness, or a mechanical Church life, and which gave a new enthusiasm to life, new wings to faith, a new domain to liberty, opening for us, maybe, a new way into the holy place of God, are forthwith stereotyped and canonised as the only forms of worship compatible with spiritual life itself.

Things may claim honourable place in the historic records of the Church ; weapons and trophies of great theological or spiritual victories may claim an admiring reverence in the museum of the Church, inasmuch as they mark notable epochs of past development ; but they are not conditions of imperative conformity, weapons for our present warfare, or the means and measure of our present development. Emphatically are they " things behind," worthy of historical remembrance, but to be forgotten in our " stretching forward to the things that are before."

Often, therefore, the prophet of more spiritual vision has had sternly to disallow even the claims of natural sentiment. The memorial serpent of brass, at one time enshrined in the very ark of God for the nourishment of pious feeling, so perverts it at another time that it has to be designated *Nehushtan*, and ruthlessly destroyed. For it is one of the curses of

superstition that it disables natural reverence. To preserve the city from invasion, its pleasant suburbs may have to be razed ; to save the country, its harvest may have to be sacrificed. When human things, in themselves legitimate, are exalted to the place of the Divine, it becomes imperative altogether to disallow them, "hating even the garments spotted by the flesh."

At every cost the clear distinction between the circumstantial and the essential, the human and the Divine, must be firmly maintained. Upon this the purity, the vigour, and the progress of the Churches depend.

There is, I venture to think, need for the urgency, not only in relation to sacerdotal Churches on the one hand, and to rationalistic theories on the other, but also to Churches which, like our own, the most strenuously oppose to these their Evangelical faith and methods. We, all of us, build into the city of God "wood, hay, stubble." We are continually putting over its portals tablets inscribed with denominational or human names ; or demanding at its barriers some sectarian shibboleth by which all who would enter are tested ; or imposing upon its common life some sumptuary laws incongruous with its true freedom and interests ; or upon its worship some ritual or ordinance in which the human and the Divine are subtly mixed up, and a common sanction claimed for both. So that, instead of the pure spirituality, the broad catholicity, and the noble liberties of the true kingdom of God, Churches organise themselves in sects, take upon them the bondage of creeds, and constrain their lives into mechanical conformity to ritual ordinances. How rapidly the catholic liberties of Primitive Church life were narrowed into arbitrary conventionalisms, first of the Greek, then of the Roman Church ! How suggestive of narrowness and intolerance the controversies of the third and fourth



centuries ; the schism, for instance, on the observance of Easter ! With what fatal facility the Churches of the Reformation took the impress of Luther and Calvin, of Cranmer and Knox, of Anglican and Puritan ! How modern Churches designate themselves by individual names or peculiar observances, dissent from which is unconsciously regarded as the measure of departure from Christ ! Even when, in revolt from all conventional Churches men have repudiated Paul and Cephas and Apollos, and have made it their boast "We are of Christ," they have only recoiled into a sectarian repudiation of sectarianism, having a special animosity of its own.

Theoretically, two things are clear—

*First*, that the human can have no co-ordinate or permanent place with the Divine.

The Divine is spiritual, vital, essential ; therefore it is catholic and eternal. The human is material, circumstantial, fortuitous ; therefore it is local, fluctuating, and temporary. However pertinent and effective for its special occasion, it becomes incongruous and effete through changing circumstances. It cannot, therefore, continue ; it is a "fashion of this world which passeth away ;" and if it be not thrown off in the natural development of things, it will be perversely built into the edifice as "wood, hay, stubble," and will have at last to be burned out by the fire of God. And the more assiduously it has been built into the fabric, the more inextricably it has been intermixed with the Divine, the more dislocating will be the rectifying process, and the more devastating its issue. Think of the melancholy *débris* to which God's fire must reduce many august ecclesiastical fabrics ; the huge and manifold carnality, superstition, and ceremony, the meagre residuum of genuine spiritual life !

*Secondly*, the weakness and worthlessness of Church systems must be in proportion to the "wood,

hay, stubble" built into them. What a fractious mixture of eternal truths with human expediences it often is! How the spiritual is corrupted and hampered by the carnal!

Do we, then, as churches clearly maintain this distinction between the two, and, while freely employing human expedients, keep them from usurping the place of Divine verities?

There is no formula that can designate them, no rubric that can assign them. Like all things of the spirit, they are "spiritually discerned." It is the culture of a life that has to be inculcated, not a Church order that has to be regulated; only, more than in most Churches, our traditions and our spiritual culture will, we think, facilitate its attainment.

We need, therefore, a clear spiritual eye, to keep constant watch against the intrusion of the ecclesiastical into the domain of the spiritual, and a firm discriminating hand which, while using the circumstantial for its purposes, resolutely refuses it further place, however potent it may have been. Often, indeed, the best things must be the most imperatively disallowed. There are "lights from heaven that lead astray;" there are virtues that destroy Churches as well as nations:

"Lest one *good* custom should corrupt the world."

The human form of apprehending truth must not be confounded with its Divine substance; which determines the place of Church creeds. The human embodiment must not be confounded with the spiritual life; which determines the place of ecclesiastical organisations. The human mode may not dominate the worshipping inspiration; which determines the place of Church ritual. The human implement may not be confounded with vital processes; which determines the place of religious agencies.

Than such discriminations few things demand a

finer spiritual faculty, or are practically more arduous. Who is there who precisely maintains them? Who draws firmly the boundary line between the domains of the spiritual and the material? or could be certain how much is of the Divine life, how much of the human organism?

We ourselves, moreover, are ever growing to greater power of spiritual understanding. As we "become men, we put away childish things." Church creeds change and loosen; Church forms are reduced to expediciencies; the formative husk falls away as the spiritual fruit ripens; the letter is increasingly dominated by the spirit; that which yesterday was full of inherent sanctity is to-day but an ark of gopher-wood, a depository for God's truth, a point for His Shechinah to rest upon. Sometimes, that He may rebuke our superstition, God will permit His very ark itself to be delivered into the hands of Philistines. The sanctities of one age become the expediciencies of another, the obstacles and corruptions of a third.

Only spiritual aptitudes and sympathies can rule the process. With ourselves it rests to hasten or to retard the development of the spiritual. Both in individual life and in Church life the education of the spiritual is our own responsibility. Religious sympathy, true idea, cultured sensibilities, right endeavour, guarded habit, do much to give keenness to intuition, and ascendancy to the spiritual—"A conscience *exercised* to discern between good and evil."

How striking the persistency and the development of type in Churches!

Think of Greek and Roman, Anglican and Puritan Churches. How invariable the type, how persistent the tendency, how continuous the development of each—"they go from strength to strength." Sacerdotal Churches become more and more imperious and ritual; Evangelical Churches more and more spiritual and free. Hence the responsibility of our Congregational



churches to cultivate and develop the spiritual principles and tendencies of our forefathers, so that we may attain to clearer heights of spiritual discernment, to larger ways of spiritual freedom, to richer fruits of spiritual life.

It never, indeed, can be an absolute alternative. So far as we know, pure spirit cannot exist either in life or in thought. Some body must be prepared for it. Some medium of communication is essential to it. Thought must have material and inspiration and forms of expression. Life must have its quickening, its vital causation and nurture, from Him who is the Fountain of life, and for its ministry it must find some form of embodiment.

Hence in the discrimination of the human and the Divine, which I am insisting upon, the encroachment of the material and the sensual of which I have spoken is not the only antagonist to be guarded against. If, on the one hand, we have to contend against the sensuous degradation of the spiritual; on the other hand, we have to contend against the emasculation of the ultra- or the pseudo-spiritual, the entire or undue disallowance of the human.

Thus, a school of modern thinkers is strongly asserting itself, which, rightly apprehending the transcendency of the spiritual in religious life, presses as a logical inference that all that is not intrinsically spiritual is to be disallowed or disparaged. A kind of resuscitated Manicheism arrays their thought and their feeling against all material ministries to spiritual life. Not only creeds and Churches, but the Bible and the Christ are relegated, and somewhat contemptuously, to the domain of the circumstantial and the superfluous, if not the inimical. It is a kind of Persian Cosmos of the Spirit. Ormuzd is antagonistically arrayed against Ahriman. Instead of the deeper harmony of life, which determines the place and mutual relations of spirit and body, the shallower

and discredited conception of an antinomy of life is set up; spirit and matter are essential and eternal foes.

Thus in the address of Dr. James Martineau—*clarum et venerabile nomen*—recently delivered to his Unitarian brethren, and entitled “Our Loss and Gain in Recent Theology,” this position is taken. Personally, I cannot refer to this great thinker without a respectful tribute to the literary beauty, religious sincerity, and spiritual sensibility that characterise him. Few men regard the Lord Jesus Christ with a purer or more passionate spiritual affection. Few have rendered to Him a more reverential homage, a worship absolute in everything but in name, and more, I often think, than he himself knows—“the spirit of the prophet is not subject to the prophet.” Few men dogmatically denying evangelical beliefs have yielded their hearts more fully to their influence. None the less do I feel it imperative to take strong exception to the positions taken in this address.

Congratulating his co-religionists on the “total disappearance of all external authority in religion,” Dr. Martineau tells them that “the yoke of the Bible has followed the yoke of the Church;” and that, in relation to their present standpoint, “the conception of a canonical literature that shall for ever serve as a Divine Statute Book belongs to an age of culture that has passed away. . . . It is simply a *fact* that *dictated* faith and duty are no longer possible, and that by way of textual oracle, you can carry to the soul no vision of God, no contrition for sin, no sigh for righteousness;” that that which “was once used as a text-book has become a human literature;” that we are “driven from words to realities, and must sink right home to the inward springs of religion in our nature and experience.”

In the orator’s judgment, therefore, emancipation from the “book-theology” of the Bible, as he

designates it, is the first great step in an advance to the spiritual.

Of course it is true that, on any conception of it, the Bible is only an external ministry to the inward spiritual life; but is it, as here represented, only a minister of the transient thought of darker ages, of intermediate stages of development? Is it not rather, as for eighteen centuries most Christian men have deemed it, a record of indubitable facts, of successive manifestations of God, a developing revelation of fundamental and eternal truths in the theology of the true God, and of essential requirements in a true religious life? In all human sciences there are phases of belief that pass with more perfect knowledge; but are there not also fundamental truths that no changes of opinion affect? To which category do the fundamental teachings of the Bible belong?

I must confess to a little surprise that so acute a thinker as Dr. Martineau should have so conceived of the Bible which he repudiates. Is it an accurate representation of the Bible that it is, primarily at least, a "dictated faith and duty," a "book-theology," a book of words as contrasted with realities, a "textual oracle," a theological creed, an ethical code? Is not its true character that of a historical record? The Bible does involve theological truths, it does inculcate religious duties; but it does not take the form either of an oracle, a creed, or a code. Other religious books do this—the Vedas and the Koran, for example—the result of which is an ever-growing anachronism, a mass of obsolete ideas and prescriptions. So misrepresent the Bible, and it is not easy to avoid confusion and paradox.

The Scriptures of the older dispensations contain institutions and rules, partial ideas and prescriptions, which the Christian life of the New Testament has altogether outgrown. The religious ideal of Sinai and of the Jewish Leviticus is even formally superseded by



the religious ideal of Jesus Christ. The Christian conscience avowedly transcends the Jewish conscience. But this only proves that the Bible is formally a history. Its one great purpose is to record, in a series of historic revelations, the development of God's great saving purpose in Jesus Christ, a purpose demanding gradual preparation and religious education. It necessarily, therefore, presents the thought of God in its relation to the religious life of man in various aspects, and in successive stages of development. God "spake unto the fathers by divers portions and in divers manners until at the end of the days he spake in His Son;" a manner of revelation altogether incompatible with the idea of an oracle, a creed, or a code. It is a series of successive revelations of God to man, exhibited as life only can be exhibited, in dramatic incidents, in individual biographies, in national history, in contemporary song and sermon, poem and prophecy; in forms, that is, as varied as the thinkings and moods and experiences of actual human life.

Whatever theological or religious teaching there is, it takes the form that all historic teaching takes. We see the Divine teachings, we see phases of human character, we see the moral sequence of human actions. God gives institutions and laws to Israel suited to its stage of religious development; David pours out in song the religious ideas of his age; Isaiah prophesies to the actual condition of the people. God reveals His thoughts and urges forward His great purpose through the characters and histories of men. Divine truths take form in human thought; Divine purposes are advanced by human conduct. Patriarch, prophet, king—Abraham, Moses, David—all contribute the service of their respective epochs. God's truth and holiness are seen in their practical conflicts with human error and sin. With lofty over-ruling purpose He urges His steady course against even the strongest human passions, the strongest national tendencies.

Nothing is more wonderful than the steady advance of generation after generation ; each actor, each event, a reluctant or an unconscious contributor to the Divine working, until the whole process is explained by its consummation in Christ. From the first vague promise of a deliverer to the transgressor in Eden, through a thousand forms, institutions, and experiences of human life, each a natural and progressive stage of development, we see the grand process unconsciously advancing, until, when from the advent of the Christ we look back upon it, we see an orderly plan and a continuous development, which in its manifold conditions and harmonies is a miracle of history. It does not lessen the inspiration of lawgiver or prophet that he prophesies to his own generation. It does not affect the inspiration of the Bible writers that they record contemporary events, contemporary relations of God to man ; it simply enhances the harmony of the whole series of writings—so unconsciously and providentially gathered into the canon—into a miracle which only the supernatural can explain.

If, then, this be the character of the Bible, as it indisputably is—not an oracle, not a theological creed, not a code of religious precepts, but the historical development of a saving purpose—in what rational sense can the Bible be dispensed with, or religious men emancipate themselves from its yoke ? As well talk of dispensing with the history of the Peloponnesian War, of being emancipated from the yoke of the constitutional history of England. As well talk of dispensing with the phenomena of the physical creation, or of man's intellectual or moral nature, through which, according to our ever-developing intelligence, God reveals Himself, and man grows to His science.

The only rational and pertinent question concerning the Bible is, Is it true ? Are the representations of God which it develops historically and morally accurate ?

Did these Divine manifestations occur, and are they congruous with our own moral nature, and with our conceptions of God? Is the historical testimony sustained by our moral consciousness? Does the Bible as a whole—as a progressive revelation of God finding its consummation in Christ—realise our highest moral idea of what God should be and do?

All other questions concerning the Bible—its canon, its inspiration, its authors—are important only as they concern this. All other phenomena of the Bible record—its dispensations, its ordinances, its miracles, its prophecies—are subordinate to this great moral conception of the formal and developing purpose of the whole. Imperfect in relation to the ultimate revelation of Christ the earlier teachings of the Bible may and must be; but imperfection is not error, save as childhood is error, as pupilage is error; rather is it undeveloped truth.

Theological doctrines and religious precepts lie in the Bible as scientific doctrines and physical injunctions lie in the phenomena and properties of Nature: they have to be gradually formulated by study and experience. Just as the science and physical ministry of each generation are proportionate to its developing knowledge of Nature, so its theological wisdom and religious goodness are proportionate to its developing knowledge of the Bible. Neither faith nor duty is dictated in the pedagogic way that Dr. Martineau assumes; “a Divine text-book,” in this sense, the Bible nowhere professes to be. But that it is something more than a mere “human literature” its marvellous phenomena compel us to conclude. If it be not the supernatural record of God’s historic revelation of Himself, it is a miracle of fortuitous plan and purpose, of intellectual and moral harmony, more inexplicable still.

In every sense, moreover, that is not trifling, words are not the antitheses of realities, but their necessary



expression, the means whereby the knowledge of realities is conveyed; without which, indeed, every department of science would be incalculably impoverished. Why should words be a more incongruous medium for making us acquainted with the history of God's revelation of Himself, and with His thoughts concerning man's religious life, than for making us acquainted with the history of Julius Cæsar, or with the ideas of Plato?

How, again, in the sense intended, is it philosophically possible to find "the inward springs of religion in our own nature and experience," any more than to find there the inward springs of history, or of science, or of philosophy, or of social conduct? Capacity we possess, but capacity is not inspiration. It is not even the material which supplies it; much less is it a "spring." Before religion can well up in "our own nature," knowledge of Divine things must be imparted to it; and if experience bears any testimony, the very disposition for true religiousness, what we figuratively call "life," must be quickened by that Divine touch from which all life comes. What other part of our nature is sufficient for its own knowledge and development? In virtue of what analogy can this be claimed for our religiousness?

In thus repudiating the Bible and its yoke, Dr. Martineau can hardly, I think, mean that in their advance towards the spiritual in religion he and his co-religionists have soared so high that they have left beneath their feet as effete things the theological teachings and ethical ideals of the Bible. He would, I think, be the first to acknowledge that in the entire range of human speculation there is no conception of God so sublime as that of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and no ideal of moral life comparable to that of the precepts and of the example which the peerless life of Christ constitutes. But should not this have been said? Has he not been

betrayed by dogmatic exigences into a position sublimely regardless of facts—a confusion, at any rate, of the imperfect forms of the historic embodiments of the Bible with its underlying and ultimate truths? It ought not to be difficult to distinguish between the Divine ideal and its poor and pitiful realisation in human lives.

A still graver affirmation follows. Dr. Martineau congratulates his co-religionists that, in their advance towards the spiritual religion, they have effected “the disappearance from our religion of the entire Messianic mythology . . . the total discharge from our religious conceptions of that central Jewish dream which was always asking, ‘Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?’” Meaning, their dismissal of everything supernatural connected with the person and work of Jesus Christ as contained in the records of the evangelists. “From the person of Jesus,” he says, “everything official attached to Him by the evangelists or by divines has fallen away. . . . He has no consciously (!) exceptional part to play, but only to *be* what He is; to follow the momentary love, to do and say what the hour may bring, to be quiet under the sorrows which piety and purity incur, and die away in the prayer of inextinguishable trust.” And further, he designates this emancipation from old faiths concerning the Christ as “the dissolution of scenic dreams.”

These old faiths in the historic facts narrated by the evangelists stand or fall by their own proper historic evidence. This of course cannot be touched here; but it may be legitimate for us to ask, Is the assumption that this is the true condition of the spiritual justified by either moral philosophy or the experience of human lives? Is such renunciation of the Christ of the New Testament an essential condition of the highest spiritual life? Does His rejection by a Church or by an individual life ordinarily mark

a stage in the advance from the spiritual to the more spiritual ; from a cold, formal type of religious life to fervid piety, transcendent holiness, enthusiastic consecration ?

Does not such a congratulation deny, first, the very laws and possibilities of the spiritual ; and next, the emphatic testimony of all actual religious experience ? Is not Dr. Martineau again confounding ignorant and accidental perversions of Messianic form with the normal Messianic idea ; and thus unceremoniously sweeping away not only the human accretion, but the Divine substance ? Another illustration of the law that the pseudo-spiritual is as fatal to the truly spiritual by evaporating it as the materialistic is by denying it.

Is it a true philosophy thus to confound spiritual life with its quickening source and nutriment in Christ, any more than, as we have seen, it is a true philosophy to confound the religious understanding with the Biblical knowledge that ministered to it ? The highest Christian life we know is the most ample in its confession of dependence upon the Christ : " I live, yet not I, it is Christ that liveth in me."

Assuming the historic truth of the Biblical revelation of Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son and Mediator, is there anything in His relations to the spiritual life of men that is incompatible with its highest development ? Whether the answer be asked of moral philosophy or religious experience it is surely unequivocal.

Is there any form of conscious life, physical, intellectual, or moral, that is not dependent for its existence, its nurture, and its continuance upon some " power not ourselves," and that is altogether external to us ? Why should the spiritual life be an exception or be incongruous with the analogies of other life ? In what way is it inconsistent with spiritual religiousness that it should be made possible by the incarnation



and atonement of a Divine Christ, quickened and sustained by His Spirit, and instructed and inspired by His teaching?

Of course the external power is not the subjective life. The Scripture which reveals its conditions is not the personal life. The Christ by whom it is made possible is not the personal life. The Divine Spirit by whom it is quickened is not the personal life. But what is there anomalous in this? We may go farther—as logically Dr. Martineau must, if he would not lapse into a vague and unintelligible pantheism—and say, God Himself—the Source of all life; whose secret, life in all its springs and modes is, and upon whose sustenance it is momentarily dependent—God Himself is not the personal life. But the personal life is not the less individual, or the less able to find its perfection, because thus conditioned. What is the logic, what is the philosophy, that affirms that in order for the spiritual life to attain to its perfection, it must be emancipated from “the entire Messianic mythology.”

This tendency to ultra-spiritualism is perhaps as strong in human nature as the opposite tendency to superstition. It is a tendency of the noblest souls. They imagine the perfection of pure spirit, liberated from all conditions of body and circumstance. Seeking after what can exist only in the spiritual imagination, they refuse the legitimate and necessary ministry of the sensible, and thus they not only fail to realise their ideal, but they make direr shipwreck than more prosaic souls. It is the mirage of religious life; it simply mocks the necessities of the soul.

It has been a delusion of all religious ages. Anchorites and Ascetics, Manicheans and Mystics, Monks and Puritans, Quakers and philosophic Spiritualists, are alike in their revolt against the composite and fundamental laws of our being, and have invariably wrought their own Nemesis. The phenomena of human nature, the facts of human life

are against them; and facts laugh at philosophies, while their discomfited votaries pass into fanaticism or despair. So long as the spirit itself is conditioned, so long will its nurture depend upon material circumstances.

The true philosophy of life, therefore, is the right adjustment of things as they really are. It does not follow, because the spirit is not the body, that the spirit therefore is independent of the body: "it takes a body to keep a soul;" or, because true progress is from the less spiritual to the more spiritual, that the ideal aim is spirit disembodied, or the ideal method a disparagement of material things. This were as philosophically absurd as it is naturally impossible; therefore, whenever religion in her imaginative dreams has in this way sought her spiritual ends, she has simply disabled and dishonoured herself. Better for faith to walk surely though humbly on the solid earth, and slowly and painfully to climb to spiritual heights, than to make itself artificial wings, which, melting in the sunlight of heaven, only precipitate an ignominious and destructive fall.

How experience answers the question we shall see by-and-by. I will only add here, that the true function of the spiritual seer—he who discerns the future, and would lead men on to its attainment—is not to imagine spiritual Utopias, or to urge fanatical expedients; it is to point out the true uses of life as it is, to adjust the true conditions of the spiritual and the material, and, while maintaining the distinction between that which is ministered to and that which ministers, to respect and regulate both. That we keep before the eyes of men a true and lofty spiritual ideal, after which they are to strive and which all things must serve, is imperative; but we may starve the spiritual by disallowing the proper ministry of the material, just as we may overbear and corrupt the spiritual by an undue encroachment of the material.

It is, therefore, a question of degree and adjustment, concerning which different men and different ages will give different answers. We can give only the answer of our own day; according to the lights we have, adjust degrees and determine relations, ever aiming at a more spiritual condition still. There can be no more fatal betrayal of the truly spiritual than to deliver it over to the delusive imaginations and the impracticable methods of the falsely spiritual.

II. May we, then, in the light of these principles, venture to prognosticate the Church developments of the future?

Events and the fortune of institutions are hidden from us. No man without folly may presume to forecast the course of God's providential method. Our most cherished Church systems, our forms of religious life, the best that we know and realise, may be modified or superseded by something better. But the conditions of spiritual development itself can scarcely be mistaken. And if forecast has any value, it is to demonstrate tendencies and to anticipate issues, that we may be incited to a constant and strenuous striving after the eternal truths and purposes of God.

In the Divine order of things it is almost a truism to say that that which is morally the truest, which realises the spiritual the most purely and fully, must ultimately be triumphant.

The one guiding star of the soul amid the perplexity and darkness of human things, the one sure anchoring amid the tempests of human passion, and the shipwreck of human devices, is fidelity to the instincts and convictions of our spiritual nature. Whatever the desolations of intellectual doubt, whatever the dismay when familiar forms and sacred beliefs fall away from us, the man or the Church that is faithful to his spiritual apprehensions will be saved from shipwreck, and will, sooner or later, find God.



If with honest hearts we simply strive to discover the true, and to attain the right, we are on the lines of the Divine working, the sanction of all that is best in human experience is upon us, and we have bound ourselves to the destiny of God's purposes. In the final issue of things he will find himself most in harmony with God whose conceptions have been the most spiritual, whose strivings have been the most holy.

1. May we not, for instance, confidently conclude that the Church of the future will be that which in theological teaching and religious nurture the most fully provides for the spiritual necessities of men?

To this test theologies must finally be brought; and in proportion as we find them at variance with the deepest instincts and necessities of human nature, their ultimate failure may, without presumption, be affirmed.

That there should be any divorce between theology and practical religious life is in every way disastrous. But when the alternative is between theoretical theology and the facts of human nature, there can be but little hesitancy as to either the truth or the issue; the philosophy that has to "pity the facts" has not a very hopeful future.

It scarcely needs be said that religious life is vitally dependent upon a true theology, that in the actual realisation of things there must be perfect harmony between theological truth and the highest religious life. We are made to know; truth for its own sake is the imperious obligation of a man. The intellect is as much made for truth as the moral nature is for goodness. It is its natural impulse to seek truth; simply to know is the religious satisfaction of the intellect. Truth, again, is alone nutritive; error is essentially sterile—it is the mother of death. No life can grow or continue save as it is fed by truth; there can, therefore, be no religious life save as there is theological truth.

In inquiries after theological truth I am as imperatively bound to reverence the intellectual conscience as in inquiries after scientific truth. I may not make mere tastes or sympathies, therefore, the criterion of my theology. If a theology cannot be historically established or morally justified, intellectual science has every right to forbid it. And it need not make the process of inquiry less judicial that great interests are involved in the result. There are few processes of inquiry in which we are not practically interested. No interests are so great or vital as religious interests, and upon our theological knowledge they must depend. Knowledge is not life, but it is the nutriment of life, and upon its quality life depends.

It is, to say the least, a strong presumption that that theology is both scientifically and historically true which finds human nature in its deepest needs, and most fully accounts for all its phenomena: which remedies its greatest ills, which satisfies its broadest sympathies, which inspires its noblest holiness, which fills its largest hopes. And it is an equal presumption against any theological system, whatever its scientific pretension, when it fails to do this. The moral instincts are a surer indication of truth than the intellectual understanding. On any theory of final causes we can scarcely imagine that theology to be wrong which, as tested by experience, is fullest of spiritual satisfaction and power. We cannot without moral absurdity imagine falsehood to be more fruitful than truth. In the very nature of things the highest religious life must be the product of the truest theology.

We may fairly, I think, bring to this test the comparative claims of the Rationalistic and the Evangelical systems.

The future will be with the Church that has in it the greatest moral forces, and the greatest moral forces are those that most powerfully affect the conscience and the religious heart of men.

In the light of Christian history, then, and of almost every variety of religious experience, are we not warranted in affirming that no theological ideas are comparable in fitness and power to those that are significantly designated Evangelical? While, as an equally certain historical fact, no Church repudiating these ideas has developed either strength or permanence. Where is the Rationalistic Church to be found that is either historic, powerful, or missionary? Just in proportion as Evangelical ideas take possession of men they have stricken deep roots in human nature, they have excited a fervent, spiritual life, they have inspired a pitiful, self-sacrificing, aggressive zeal.

Thus Romanism has been a greater and more permanent religious force than Rationalism, Evangelicism than Unitarianism or Moderatism. Superstition even, which is the ignorant fervour of the religious life, is a greater spiritual power than Scepticism, which is the negation of it.

Their differentiae are not constituted by intellect, learning, or zeal, but palpably by the life which distinctive Evangelical theology inspires; sometimes working in despite of ignorance, fanaticism, superstition, or disadvantageous circumstance. The history of Puritanism, of the Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century, of different Churches in our own day, are familiar British illustrations of phenomena of which the entire history of the Church is full.

So soon as any Church rids itself of the "mythology of the Christ"—rejects, that is, the great theological beliefs of His Incarnation, His Atonement, His Resurrection from the Dead—it is emasculated as a moral force. The Church of living, assimilating, aggressive, religious men degenerates into a coterie of men learnedly holding theological opinions which for the most part are negations. It may imagine itself to have attained to a profounder theological philosophy,



a more articulate scientific certainty, a more unembarrassed religious ethic—to be, in short, a society of superior persons ; but the curse of religious impotence has smitten it. It has lost the power of popular appeal ; it is a *peculium* of the elect.

In the ordinary sequence of things the thinker, the philosopher, the scientific discoverer, is the pioneer of popular faith. Knowledge exhaled into the higher firmament of science descends in rain and fertilises the earth. The probation of witness-bearing may be long and arduous, but it has a uniform issue ; sooner or later truth compels conviction. In rationalistic theology the process is reversed. Instead of the cloud gathering richness and emptying itself in fertilising showers, it becomes more and more attenuated, assumes forms more and more fantastic, and evaporates in infinite space.

Rationalistic theology fails of historic permanence. It wins only the suffrages of the speculative ; men who seek for working power in religious life turn away from it. The multitude in their practical religious needs almost instinctively recoil from its barren metaphysic. We never find the record in its history, “the common people heard it gladly.” The similes of its processes are not the mustard seed that filled the earth, the leaven that leavened the whole lump. Rather is it a theological Sisyphus, an intermittent fever, a fitful sectarianism, blending with the negations of the Sadducee the self-complacency of the Pharisee, proudly standing aloof and declaring that “the people that knoweth not the law are accursed.” Few things in the history of thought are more emphatic than the evanescence, the rapid transformations of materialism. “It cometh up and is cut down like a flower, and never continueth in one stay.” Why should it be so ?

For obvious reasons thinkers are with it in larger relative proportions than with Evangelical Churches---

scarcely any, indeed, who are not thinkers, or do not think themselves to be such. Intellectual power and acquirement are with it; oratory is with it; why cannot it establish itself in permanent forms? It has the anomalous and fatal defect of popular powerlessness, popular incongruity.

Is it, then, the true inference that potent religious life repudiates thought and culture, and allies itself with ignorance and fanaticism? that "ignorance is the mother of devotion"? The illustrious record of Christian philosophers, theologians, scholars, and thinkers, from Paul to Augustine, from Aquinas to Bacon, from Pascal to Butler, and to the host of eminent men who believe in our own day, make this theory untenable. Among modern philosophers the rejectors of Christianity are a very small minority indeed.

It is simply the old dilemma. The facts are more than the philosophy; and its most ingenious theories, its most vehement reasoning, cannot alter them. When, with any school, its theory is at variance with the common human instinct, we may be sure that it is the philosophy that is false, not the human fact.

With the mass of men religious life is a practical necessity, not a speculative philosophy. They need for their moral disability of life, for its historic despair, for its dark forebodings and blind yearnings the "strong Son of God" which the Christ proclaims Himself to be. They need for their sin the Atonement which His Cross provides; for their death in sin the quickening which His Spirit brings; for their example and inspiration the ideal life of perfect purity, sympathy, and help which the Christ Himself is; and for their future the living hope of immortality which His resurrection creates.

These are not theoretic dogmas concerning a supernatural personage, any more than the illuminating,

quickenings, fructifying beams of the sun are an astronomical speculation concerning that luminary; they are practical powers of religious life, they reveal religious possibilities to men, and enable their attainment. Men know the Christ as the earth knows the sun, by the quickenings of life which He causes. Our entire nature responds to His presentation. He is "all our salvation and all our desire."

Not, indeed, that the majority of those who receive these great Christian truths can demonstrate them theologically, or establish them historically. As with all other scientific truth, only the scholars and philosophers of Christianity can do this. Neither logic nor historical evidence enters into the process of popular conviction. Cultured rejectors of these truths can easily secure an argumentative refutation. But the conviction lies deeper than argument. It is an intuitive recognition of fitness, an experimental proof of sufficiency. As the eye recognises the light, as the heart feels love, as hunger is satisfied by food, as life is demonstrated by living, so the truths of Christ are made certain to sinful men; new forces enter into them, new satisfactions fill them, changes and processes are wrought in them that nothing else can work. Men cannot mistake the consciousness of life, or of that which produces it; their new powers of religious penitence, faith, holiness; their new religious affections, worship, love, self-sacrifice, sympathy with God, joy in Christ. Life is more than reasonings, more than testimony. Against its throbbing consciousness, its potent processes and issues, there are no reasons; the learned demonstrations of theological philosophy are powerless. "Whether this man be of God I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see." Seeing the man who was healed standing with the disciples, the rulers of the Sanhedrin could say nothing against it. No evidence is so demonstrative as that of healed men.



When, therefore, on the one hand the scientific rationalist tells us that by rejecting the supernatural Christ he escapes difficulties of the intellectual reason, and men and women who are trying to live a practical religious life tell us, on the other, that by accepting Him they overcome the moral difficulties of the soul, and achieve holy lives, there can be no hesitancy as to which we should give credence. If history has any testimony to bear concerning the moral forces of human life, it is that the highest morality and piety that men attain is in virtue of the distinctive inspirations of Evangelical beliefs. It is one of the phases of the great cause, *Theory versus Fact*, argued in every department of human thought. Which is to be accepted as true—the intellectual verdict of the few, discredited by a paralysed righteousness, or the moral verdict of the many, sustained by changes and sanctities of character which are simply miracles of life?

To this broad vital test we may fairly put the question; not, of course, meaning that there is no religiousness in the one, or that there is no failure of religiousness in the other. We simply adduce a general characterisation so indubitable as scarcely to admit of question. The ultimate test of theology is religious life. "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come unto you."

The two great criteria of Evangelical belief which give it this distinctive moral power are—

(1) The profound moral righteousness of its theory of forgiveness.

The salvation which it propounds is infinitely more than mere safety. It is a theory of forgiveness which perfectly satisfies the moral conscience, so that we reverence its principles as much as we rejoice in its immunities. It is a satisfaction for our entire moral nature. In this every rationalistic theory of religiousness fails. It has something to slur over, or to resolve

into evasive feeling. Unable to deny the fact of human sin, it proffers no solution of its relations to Divine righteousness. It simply suggests that by-gones should be by-gones. It resolves the entire moral problem by mere pitiful feeling, a merciful act of oblivion in which righteousness is entirely left out of the account.

This is not satisfactory to the moral consciousness. The Evangelical theory of Atonement is. It may, as we are told, be a misconception, but it is perfect in its moral harmonies with our highest conceptions of the righteousness of God, and with the deepest moral consciousness of human nature. It does not leave law a dishonoured thing. It does not leave the conscience unsatisfied. It does not climb to God's favour over prostrate principles of righteousness. It does not refuse a solution of the relations of "sins that are past" to perfect rectitude and inviolable law. It does not escape penalty as a man who breaks prison. From first to last, in the least thing as in the greatest, the moral process is thorough, the moral sense approves. Justice itself pronounces the acquittal. The process is as righteous as the issue is blessed.

And the constitution of our moral nature is such that it demands this satisfaction. Moral sequence cannot be violated without resentment; the nobler the moral feeling, the deeper the sense of sin, the more imperative the demand for perfect righteousness in forgiveness.

It follows, therefore, that the more perfect the moral satisfaction which a theology gives, the more potent will be its appeal to human nature. This appeal of the gospel forgiveness in every part of its process to our inherent sense of righteousness, to the indestructible instincts of our moral nature, is the secret of its distinctive power. If it be a popular misconception, the misconception carries a profounder principle of righteousness than any of its substitutes.

In completeness of idea it satisfies even the moral imagination.

(2) The other element of moral power is its perfect ethic ; and that not only in its ideal, but in its dynamic force, its provision for practically attaining its ideal. For the criterion of moral excellence is practicability. A Utopian Christianity would constrain no serious endeavour ; men have always known a holiness higher than they could realise.

The peculiarity of the Christian ethic is that, while the holiness that it demands transcends all that men have dreamed, it supplies an inspiration that not only makes it attainable, but makes its pursuit an enthusiasm.

For such, again, is the moral constitution of our nature, that nothing can satisfy us in the Deity that we conceive, or in the religious life proposed to us, but the utmost imagination of holiness, " We give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." Believing men may practically fail ; their lives may contradict their discipleship ; but they borrow no excuses from the loftiness or the impracticability of the Christian requirements. The failure is their conscious shame, their admitted culpability ; they fall short of their yearning, but it is their yearning notwithstanding. They would resent the suggestion that the Christian standard should be lowered or its demand lessened. Who ever heard an Evangelical believer lay the blame of his failure upon the inadequacy of the spiritual forces that are in Christ ?

A man like Paul will groan over the inadequacy of Judaism, and complain that his progress is hindered by the " body of death " to which he is chained. Let him find Christ, and he shouts in the joy of a glad surprise : the hateful ligatures are severed, he is consciously full of spiritual power and grace.

Is it not, on the other hand, both characteristic and ominous that when Evangelical beliefs are abandoned



spiritual forces are weakened and moral life relaxed? Under all systems individual men have attained righteousness and godliness, often beautiful and tender: there were noble lives amid the festering corruptions of Greek and Roman paganism. Christianity itself as a moral force works far beyond the dogmatic recognition of it. Nevertheless the general moral tendencies of systems are unmistakable. The tendency of rationalistic life in modern communities is as uniform as the tendencies of old Pagan life in Greece and Rome. The history is lengthened enough and the phenomena are diversified enough for a certain induction.

The uniform tendency of a rationalistic theology is to relax the moral sanctions of life, to weaken the moral forces of virtue, far beyond the margin of any Puritan asceticism.

Not only are the dogmas of Evangelical belief denied, its moral restraints are resented. A sufficient illustration of this may be found in theories of the relationship of the sexes. One of the first and most uniform speculations of rationalistic ethics is an assault upon the sacredness of marriage. Nothing would be easier than a large induction, from both precept and instance, of men and women, otherwise virtuous and distinguished, revolting from the Christian obligation of marriage and from its lofty demands upon chastity; while the removal of Christian social restraints from the lax and dissolute leads to rapid and flagrant social demoralisation; with fatal precision they follow the example of their Pagan prototypes.

And, more generally, one is almost appalled at the depression of moral enthusiasm, at the chill of the religious sensibilities where Rationalism prevails. What a cold sardonic satisfaction the iconoclasts of scepticism evince if they can but overthrow an evangelic creed! The desolations which they cause, the moral forces which they paralyse, give them no

concern. They can destroy a tender faith with a chuckle, and pitilessly uproot the moralities of a man because, as they think, they grow in an illicit soil. Add to this their own deteriorated spirit of earnest inquiry, the flippant *insouciance* with which, like skaters over thin ice, they skim over depths of spiritual and moral truths which are perplexing and agonising the souls of men; together with their utter lack of missionary self-sacrifice. Whatever their characteristics, they cannot be charged with either an enthusiasm for truth or an enthusiasm for humanity.

Human nature being what it is, there can be no hazard in affirming that this will not be the Church of the future. Men will demand that which satisfies the noblest aspirations of their moral and spiritual nature. And so far as the experience of nearly two thousand years bears testimony, this satisfaction is most fully realised by the Evangelical constituents of humanity. Only so far as they include these do corrupt Churches maintain their hold, and only in virtue of their prominent presentation of these do pure Churches win their triumphs.

Many things may be associated with Evangelical beliefs which modify their operation, but even these cannot destroy their vitality. Excessive ritual, priestly superstitions, sacramentarian corruptions, obscure their lustre and weaken their spiritual appeal, for these are the substitution of material for moral forces. On the other hand, ignorance may hold Evangelical beliefs in crude and repellent forms. Fanaticism may narrow religious recognitions and refuse religious charities, and in this way the force of Evangelical truths may be impaired. However true a religious life, however powerful an Evangelical agency, if it be not characterised by clear thinking, by profound principles, by catholic sympathies, its crudeness will dissipate its force, its intolerance will provoke resent-

ment. It is not easy to calculate how much the meagre thinking, the drivelling sentiment, the intolerant Pharisaism, and the fanatical cant-words of some sections of the Evangelical school have prejudiced its theology, limited its efficiency, and hindered its progress.

It is, too, to be fully recognised that the forms in which Evangelical truths are held must change in the future, as they have changed in the past. Subject to the laws of human developments, they have ever been in constant flux. Amid the changes that with, perhaps, unwonted violence are just now passing upon all theological thought, many modes of apprehending Evangelical truths will perish. We need not be afraid of this. It is not necessarily unspiritual in its cause, or evil in its result. Forms of thought perish by a natural law, as forms of childhood perish. Valid while they continue, they are necessarily transitory, and give way to others that are larger and more adequate. As spiritual understanding develops we necessarily attain to clearer vision and more spiritual apprehension. Doubt is an essential factor in processes of faith. A man who does not doubt never believes. Let the spirit of doubt be reverent, anxious, inquiring, and it is the very truth of a man's soul. He will not believe until he has proved. Lower forms of belief perish for higher forms to become possible. Ignorantly to receive and stubbornly to hold to traditional forms, to refuse all quest and to call it faith, is to substitute superstition and prejudice for intelligent belief, to constitute an infallibility of the darker ages of the Church. To be afraid of fairly meeting questionings, of looking provisional dogmas fully in the face, of modifying or abandoning them as increasing light may demand, is not faith, but a cowardly form of unbelief. Only by an eye open to all light, a heart implicitly obedient to all truth, can Evangelical beliefs be held; and with an ever-advancing intelligence,



an ever-deepening hold, and an ever-broadening acceptance.

The truths which were the strength and inspiration of our fathers; which possessed the convictions of Paul when—denouncing the superstition of the Jew and the rationalism of the Greek—he declared Christ to be the power of God and the wisdom of God, and avowed his determination to know nothing else among men—are still, and in largely augmented power, the moral forces of our own generation, constituting its religious strength, and inspiring its self-sacrificing philanthropy. And in these they have given indubitable earnest that they will be the conquering strength of the future.

Our own churches are not, perhaps, in so great peril from the superstition of the Jew; their more characteristic peril is the still more deadly rationalism of the Greek. Let any church preach a philosophy of Christianity instead of Christ, a science of religion instead of a vital force; let any church make it its suicidal boast that it has emancipated itself from “the mythology of the Christ,” and has retained for itself only the Christian ethic, and, whatever the religious goodness of individual men, or the reflected influence upon them of Evangelical ideas, its power as a church will be paralysed. A learned philosophy has no chance against the rudest life.

It is for us, therefore, the dictate of truest philosophy that we urge one another to an unswerving fidelity to the Evangelical faith of our fathers; that simply and prominently as they, only in the lights of modern thought and requirement, we “preach Christ,” the only moral force that can redeem the world from sin; and with whatever of philosophical science, of learned illustration, of æsthetic form, of effective eloquence, contemporary culture or personal genius may supply. For this preaching, which is “foolishness” in the estimates of man’s wisdom, is by no means a foolish

manner of preaching, a magical reiteration of Evangelical words. It has no affinities with either ignorance or intellectual weakness, coarseness, or fanaticism. It may prove its power of life notwithstanding these. But "Christ is the wisdom of God as well as the power of God ;" and the wisdom as the condition of the power.

Whatever changes of form may pass upon our Church life and thought, so long as the life and the thought themselves are held fast, the apostolic tradition will maintain its vitality. Lifted to purer heights, disencumbered of hindering superstitions and disabling ignorances, it will be to the world more than it has ever been. The future will belong to it. Against the Church built upon this rock the gates of Hades shall not prevail.

2. Is it not equally clear that the future will be with the Church that the most fully recognises the prerogatives and responsibilities of the individual religious man ?

That Churches differ immeasurably in such recognition scarcely needs be said ; it marks the difference between oligarchical and democratic Churches. And the cause of all progress, the final cause of all government, is the perfection of the people—the priesthood of God.

Between Churches like that of Rome, which organically precludes individualism, and makes implicit submission and self-effacement a cardinal principle of its discipline, and Congregational churches, which are organised on the principle of indefeasible individual prerogatives, there is the distance of the entire diameter. Between the two there are many gradations of Episcopal and Presbyteral rule, and to each in its measure the principle applies.

If the ideal and consummation of religious life be the Church development of a perfect manhood—"to

present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," "growing up to Him the living Head in all things"—the Church of the future must be that which, employing the most fully the discipline of spiritual freedom, realises most perfectly the individual result. The end of all teaching and training is to make the pupil independent of the teacher, "a law to himself."

Authoritative Churches like Rome do not even tend to this result; all function save passive acquiescence in what is ruled for him is denied to the individual. By a summary act of faith he renounces all individual responsibility. Exercises of thought are precluded by authoritative creeds and an infallible priesthood. Freedom of action is forbidden by prescriptions of authority—Pope, council, or synod; by Acts of Uniformity, or episcopal dicta. Ecclesiastical franchise is precluded by proprietary patronage—episcopal, regal, or private. Worship is minutely regulated by rubrics. Discipline is administered by ecclesiastical courts. In every department of Church life, and to the minutest particular, the congregation is absolutely disfranchised. Even the regulation of the individual conscience, the culture of the personal soul, is prescribed by priest and rubric. Scarcely a single function of thought, feeling, or action is left to the determination of individual responsibility; this is as nearly disfranchised as the moral powers of a man can be. Ecclesiastical authority, sacramental administration, and priestly function control every faculty of his nature, and provide for every necessity of his life. The priesthood is the Church, the body of believers its functionless adjunct.

Can the Church of the future be developed on the lines of such an organisation? Must not the spirit thus inculcated necessarily be of the most deteriorated and invertebrate character? It is the characteristic vice of Diocesan Episcopacy. Even where most Evangelical and least priestly, the congregation—at any



rate, under the conditions of Establishment as in England—has no responsible function, no recognised place for the exercise of its thought about doctrine, of its discretion about ritual, of its judgment about the methods of Church life and work.

The self-governing functions of Congregational churches are not merely prerogatives, they are educational processes, whereby the faculties of the religious life are developed. They are in the Church what local self-government is in a nation, an education of the individual for intelligent and well-ordered corporate life. No peoples are so ignorant and incompetent as the subjects of autocratic, oligarchical, or bureaucratic rule. None are so sagacious and strong as self-governed communities.

In the *Ecclesia* of God the individual is sacred. The Church exists for the individual, not the individual for the Church. The unit of Church life is the personal soul, and the end of Church life is its development. No prescribed creed may supersede personal processes of inquiry and conviction. The Bible lies open to the individual judgment and conscience. God's appeal is always directly to the individual soul. "Every one of us must give account of himself to God." "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." No ecclesiastical patron or synod may impose his bishop or religious teacher. A free man in Christ, responsible to God for his entire religious life, charged with the exercise of personal responsibilities, he takes counsel with those associated with him, free men like himself, and the pastor is the appointment of their collective wisdom and will. In all things pertaining to worship and work, to discipline and expediency, the prerogative is with the individual church society. In the very nature of things it cannot without a solecism be delegated.

Not by binding traditions of the past, not by external authority of the present, is the Church ruled,

but by the counsel and will of its own membership, determined by the present expediency of things, and by such light as the New Testament and the collective wisdom of the past or of other Churches may afford. It is a direct appeal to personal intelligence, conscience, and common sense, calculated by its very nature to develop the utmost wisdom and strength both in the church member and the citizen.

For the strength of a church consists not in the orthodoxy of its creed, the organisation of its government, or the completeness of its code, but in the developed faculty and moral feeling of its individual members, whereby it becomes a law unto itself, and endures though all official government should fail. And, in the very nature of things, this can be secured only by exercises of personal responsibility, demand, and struggle, experiment and mistake, failure and success.

The pursuit of truth is the essential qualification for the use of truth. He only can use truth rightly who has attained it by personal inquiry, who searches after it, assays it, learns to discriminate it, proves it by applications of it. Hence Lessing's dictum, that "if the Almighty were to give him as an alternative the possession of truth or the pursuit of it, he would humbly choose the pursuit," is the exaggeration of a true idea into a paradox and an absurdity; for it implies a preference for error. The possession of truth is a higher condition than its pursuit. Truth is to be obtained at all costs. The true alternative is not the possession and the search, but the different methods of obtaining possession. Even truth itself is a precarious and unfruitful possession for a man, if strenuous personal search has not qualified him for its use.

Were it, therefore, possible for infallible Church or traditional creed to present to a man complete and absolute truth, or to prescribe for him the best condi-

tions of Church life, he would be disqualified for their use, even could he receive them at all. The law of all knowledge is that it "grows from less to more." He who would have even "a conscience void of offence" must "exercise himself herein." Manhood is the product of growth, not of manipulation.

Hence the anomalies so often seen in the religious life of oligarchical Churches—the divorce of theological creed from religious conduct, of sacrament from holiness, of ritual and devotional acts from spiritual feeling and moral rectitude. What strange hybrids of life present themselves—devotion and dissipation, superstition and frivolity, early celebration and evening licentiousness, the viaticum of a priest condoning a life of sin, the courtesan becoming a *religieuse*, the father of Beatrice Cenci preparing a set-off for his contemplated crime by the religious dedication of a chapel! It is the natural result of the divorce between Churchism and individual spiritual life, between theological dicta and a trained understanding, between prescribed acts and conscience—things done in obedience to authority and things done in recognition of individual responsibility, and in the exercise of personal intelligence, will, and religious consciousness. And it has its exemplifications in other Churches than that of Rome.

Inconsistencies of religious life there will be in all Churches; but there is a radical difference between wrong-doing which the moral sense condemns, and wrong-doing through sheer incompetence of the untrained conscience. The sense of individual responsibility, exercises of moral freedom, train and strengthen the religious conscience. Authoritative dicta, rubrical religiousness, demoralise and deaden it.

It may possibly be urged that all this is but theory, which facts contradict; that authoritative and ritual Churches have hitherto ruled the religious world, and have thus shown themselves the best adapted for



human nature as it is; that the suffrages of men are with them, as, for instance, with the Greek, the Roman, and the Anglican Churches, which secure the adhesion, not only of the greatest numbers, but of the highest classes of society, men of the greatest wealth, possibly of the largest learning and the highest intellect, the most sumptuous churches, the most crowded congregations, and that therefore the future will presumably be with them.

The obvious reply is, that he who would wisely judge human institutions must look, not so much at existing conditions, as at principles and tendencies. The test of truth is not the suffrage of any given period, least of all when that suffrage is given under sensuous inducements; else much in the Church history of the past would have been canonised as true which the growth of spiritual intelligence and life has demonstrated to be false. Truth has not usually been with majorities. The progress of men towards ideal religiousness is very gradual, and through various stages. We grope through darkness into the light of God; through many errors we advance to truth. The leaven that is leavening the lump was once but a particle; the tree that is filling the earth so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof was once but a grain of mustard seed.

If as yet spiritual Christianity has but half conquered sensual paganism, superstitious religiousness, and worldly selfishness, let us remember that the supreme difficulty is in the first half conquest, which therefore is a fair earnest of the whole. And according to normal laws of progress it will advance in an ever-accelerating ratio.

And although in Churches the most spiritual in conception and method much has yet to be done before the religious ideal is attained, before life is as holy as its theories and aims, before sensuousness,

worldliness, and selfishness are wholly purged out, yet it is much that spiritual Churches, as such, do maintain their existence, win an ever-enlarging suffrage, and exert an ever-increasing influence.

We are bound, therefore, to insist—first, upon the validity and Divine sanction of our ideal, and, next, upon fidelity to the forces and methods that the most tend to realise it. And we may, I think, claim for our Congregational churches, and for Evangelical Churches of like spirit, that they are honestly striving after both. Ours may be the more arduous path and the slower process, but it is the surer way of success. Gradually to teach men spiritual idea, to deepen the sense of individual responsibility, to train spiritual faculty and trust; steadily to refuse mechanical means, sensuous substitutes, and doubtful expedients in doing religious work; and absolutely to rely upon purely spiritual processes, must develop a type and spirit of Church life that is characteristic and abiding, full of Divine truth and religious power—"the royal priesthood of God, the peculiar people, the holy nation."

The plea for hierarchical rule is truth and order; the unfitness of the people to determine the one and to maintain the other; their ignorance, self-will, and disorder; their lack of consentaneousness, precision, and force.

But does this mean that authority is only to be provisionally maintained, and for educational purposes, or does it mean that this is the normal, the ideal order of the Church, and that all ideas of training it for exercises of liberty are repudiated? If the end of all training be to qualify men for wise exercises of self-regulated liberty, does not the Church that refuses or neglects it, pervert its function of ruling service into a function of tyrannous usurpation? The avowed purpose of God's gift to the Church of apostles and prophets, pastors and teachers, is "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the

building up of the body of Christ ; till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"—a development, not of individual saints merely, but of the Church.

Upon this process authoritative Churches put a positive arrest. They abjure even the aim of Church development ; they recognise no progressiveness of Church life ; their sole idea is the development of rule. They strengthen their authority, and multiply their regulations, and, by an inversion of natural process, increase the helpless dependence of the people, perpetuating the childhood of the Church to the end.

In this way the Romish Church has developed. It has become more and more autocratic ; by successive acts of popular disfranchisement, from the very beginning of its history, it has at length attained an ecclesiastical and spiritual tyranny that is absolute and unique. Each successive generation has only intensified its spirit and extended its prerogative, until, "sitting in the temple of God and setting himself forth as God, he exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped." It has been reserved for our own day to formulate its dogma of Papal Infallibility, the corner-stone of its spiritual tyranny ; which would have been impossible even a century ago. This has been made possible by successive acts of usurpation which, after more or less of resistance, have been submitted to. The last wrong of slavery, and that which makes it absolute, is the heart of a slave ; and that at length has been wrought in the final acceptance of the Vatican decrees. The very conditions of growth and development have been destroyed.

Is it conceivable that a Church so utterly opposed to all human progress, so deliberately reversing all natural processes of development, can be the Church of the future ? And just in proportion as other



Churches, Greek, Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregational, do this—disallow, or fail to cherish individual liberties—they oppose the final cause of human life itself, the historic processes of God's dealings, the entire spirit of modern society, the very principles and instincts of human nature.

Even order may be purchased too dearly. Order is not the final cause of humanity, but manhood. To make a solitude is not peace; to fill prisons is not to establish virtue; a slave plantation, a reign of terror, is not social order. The wildest excesses of liberty are preferable to the negation of it; for by experiment, by failure, by suffering, self-restraint and wisdom may be learned; but for death there is no possibility of development or hope. To perpetuate helplessness in the name of peace, to make the attainment of spontaneous order impossible by denying exercises of freedom, is simply suicide. God has endowed men with the noble gift of freedom, and no follies or sufferings or sins can prevail upon His wise love to withdraw or restrain it.

The only condition of true order is liberty; the only process by which it can be evolved is by experimental exercises of it. They whose only remedy for disorders is repression by law, whose only avoidance of error is to make it impossible by the denial of liberty, have neither faith in God nor respect for their own manhood.

They attempt, indeed, the impossible. Human nature cannot be repressed. If outward development be denied it, inward distemper will be engendered: if the volcano be sealed, the earthquake is inevitable. No despotism is at peace. The most absolute are the least secure. England is more orderly and stable than Russia. Protestant Churches are more homogeneous than the Church of Rome. The spontaneous order of Free Churches is profounder, more satisfying, more stable than the enforced discipline of Established

Churches. Their schisms are fewer, their diversities less extreme, their sympathies are stronger, because they are freer; their differences are not so much discords as harmonies, in which the grand organ of the Church blends a thousand voices of faith and worship.

So that on all grounds—of common sense, of reasonable philosophy, of spiritual life, of historic experience—this prognostication also is justified. The future will be with the Church that the most fully and practically recognises the prerogatives and responsibilities of the individual life. For thus only can the highest conditions of belief, the truest sympathies of brotherhood, and the most vital bonds of union, be constituted.

Our own churches stand on these lines of progress. Their distinctive principle is that of individualism; their only recognised methods are spiritual forces.

And yet they also may practically fail. Intolerance of spirit may be as fatal to development as disallowance of law; unspiritualness of feeling may neutralise the divinest method. Congregational churches may be held in the voluntary bondage of traditional forms of belief, or worship, or work. And the more excellent the traditions, the greater the peril. The divinest things become the most subtle tyrannies. Freedom may be imprisoned in her own house.

Are we, for instance, always tolerant of independent thinkers and novel methods? Does not earnest contention for the truth sometimes become contention for our own forms of it? Do we strive to be on the side of truth, or to have truth on our side? Let the thinker have freest course for his thought, and the worker for his work. Let us put no moral disability upon men whom no Church statutes hinder. Let us be jealous of all moral ban, of all social repression, of all intolerant feeling or biassing prejudice,

of any test or disallowance of thought or method, but that of candid intelligence, generous construction, and freest spiritual judgment.

I must forbear, or other prognostications might have been hazarded.

3. The Church of the future will surely be that which in its worship and fellowship provides most fully for our entire religious nature.

How much has yet to be said concerning the spiritualising or the sensualising influence of worship, the means whereby our entire religious feeling expresses itself to God: the suitability for spiritual ends of Congregational provision for worship—æsthetic embodiments of spiritual feeling, whereby our whole nature is lifted to God and glorified, or æsthetic substitutes for it, whereby we are hindered and deteriorated!

How much has to be said about the realisation of brotherhood in Church life: its ideal, its means, its hindrances! This surely belongs to the great hope of the future, and is a present tendency towards it.

4. It might, too, be added, the future will belong to the Church which, in its ministry within and without, makes requisition not merely upon its official ministers or organised agencies, but upon the individual service of its entire membership.

“Every man in his place;” “each according to his several ability:” a secret of power and progress more fully and practically recognised by Free Protestant Churches than by any other, and both philosophically and historically the cause of their success; and of which the splendid achievements of our Methodist brethren, celebrated in their recent Ecumenical Council, are such a notable illustration. How fatally all priestly assumption and sacramental theories discourage and depress this development! And yet surely the aggregate of spiritual force in a Church is



constituted by the spirituality and zeal of its individual members.

What a large field for suggestion and urgency the true economy of Church work presents to us! But alas for the man who attempts to say everything.

Let it be for us a congratulation and an urgency that, in theory at least, both our principles of Church life, and our methods of Church worship and work, are spiritual and tend only to spiritual issues. So far as we fail of these, and become ecclesiastical, or formal, or carnal, the failure is due to the imperfections of human nature rather than to inimical Church idea. Our frequent reproach, indeed, is that our Congregationalism is a Utopia too lofty for practical realisation by imperfect human nature. Be it so; the reproach is that of Christianity itself. A lofty ideal which we fail to attain is better than an ignoble imperfection with which we content ourselves. In falling short of our ideal, we only share the experience of all disciples of spiritual Christianity. Presumptuous ignorance and carnal feeling may adulterate the spirituality of our Church life; wayward will and the strivings of selfishness may disturb the harmony of our counsels and embarrass our action; unspiritual conceptions and unworthy expedients may impair and discredit the simplicity of our methods: these are the defects of human nature, not of a Church system. They are an unfaithfulness to our own ideas, inimical to our convictions and yearnings. Against these we have to wage the common spiritual warfare of men, that our Church life may be practically lifted to its own lofty ideal.

We need only to conform our practice to our admitted and cherished principles, and, whatever the exigence, to be faithful to pure spiritual aims and methods. Let us but apprehend all truth in its spirit, not in its letter; present it to men in its spiritual aspects, and insist upon its spiritual em-

bodiment in a free religious life ; and our Churches will advance the most rapidly, and realise the most directly and fully the spiritual kingdom of the truth which the Divine Lord came to establish. They who wield spiritual force are invincible. His Church is to be "His body," identified with His own spiritual work and methods ; and its destiny is to realise "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

THE END.

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